

Jack Spurlock-Prodigal

George Horace Lorimer



JACK SPURLOCK—PRODIGAL

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She sniffed and sat down on it.

Jack Spurlock—Prodigal

By

GEORGE HORACE LORIMER

Author of "Old Gorgon Graham" and "Letters
from a Self-made Merchant to His Son."

Illustrated by

F. R. GRUGER



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INCLUDING THAT OF TRANSLATION INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES
INCLUDING THE SCANDINAVIAN

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL

TO A. V. L.
WHO FINDS SOME GOOD IN JACK

2121193

PEOPLE IN THE BOOK

JACK SPURLOCK — PRODIGAL.

JONAS SPURLOCK. The father of Jack. President of Consolidated Groceries; possessor of a railroad, and a member of "The System."

MAJOR GEORGE MAGOFFIN JACKSON. Lately a soldier of the Confederacy; now a soldier of Fortune and an implacable foe of "the Hell hounds of the System."

ANITA GREY. The daughter of poor, but very smart parents, who are trying to make ends meet on the income of a million in a set where the million should be the income.

LORD FROTHINGHAM. An American nobleman.

MISS ROBY. A Southern lady of the old school.

JIM DURHAM. An advertising man of the new school.

HANDY. A "square" gambler.

RAWDEN. President of the Trouble Trust.

Also introducing a Dancing Bear; a Teddy-bear; various members of the New and of the Old Rich; of the Worthy and of the Unworthy Poor.

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JACK SPURLOCK—PRODIGAL

JACK SPURLOCK — PRODIGAL

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL INTRODUCES HIMSELF

MY EXPULSION from Harvard came as a complete surprise to me, though I had rather expected to be dropped for low stand and was working three tutors to the bone, trying to move up a few parasangs to the position of foot of my class. But I was ruled off the course before I could achieve my proud ambition. It's rather a satisfaction, now that I look back on it, to think that, even if I did do some things of which I'm ashamed, I helped three deserving young chaps to work their way through college.

When my case came up before the faculty, it was horse and horse between the professors who wanted to drop me for low stand and those who wanted to expel me for high jinks. Prexy compromised it in his usual tactful way by dropping me first and expelling me afterward — lifted me out with a drop kick. He was awfully nice about it — expressed his regret with just the proper shade of disapproval of me in his voice,

and presented me with the *Citrus Limonum* done up in such choice language that I felt as if it were more than I should accept from a comparative stranger, but when I got outside and took the wrappings off, I found that he had handed me the lemon just the same. When it comes to beautiful thoughts, baked to a crisp brown in hot air, Prexy is the Savarin of the human intellect. It's rather curious, when one stops to think of it, that a professor should chide a fellow for low stand. He's like a dentist I knew once, who thoughtlessly kicked on the bad breaths of his patients, without stopping to reflect that the worse the breath the more business for him.

They really had no right to expel me. I was simply an innocent bystander, a looker-on in Vienna, the victim of a cruel misunderstanding, though I was n't able to make anyone believe it. It all began one afternoon when I jumped out of bed with my merry morning face, and opened the bathroom door. I shut it — quick — between me and trouble. For there by the tub, licking up a cake of tar soap, stood a large black bear, with boxing-gloves on her forepaws and a shy, sweet, Diana-surprised-at-the-bath expression on her face. Psychology was one of my favourite studies, and I noticed with a shock of surprise that, all recorded experience to the

contrary, I did not feel that this was the time to swear off. Instead, I reached behind my set of Emerson and took a mild snort. And I decided that some day, after I had had more of my share, I should write a monograph on these phenomena.

A moment's reflection convinced me that this was no great moral lesson. The way in which the bear was getting the taste of the night before out of her muzzle with a tar-soap shampoo settled that. But why the mitts? And why a bear at all? Why not a cow with red stockings? It was a knotty one, so I took another, and settled down to see if I could find out just where *Ursus minor* had butted into my quiet, studious life.

The night before had begun with money from home. It had come — by way-train — in response to a special-delivery touch on the Governor for a few hundreds with which to round out the quarter symmetrically. These lopsided quarters, that begin like one of Coal Oil Johnny's nights, and wind up like one of John D. Rockefeller's days, bewilder a man's stomach and finally make it cross. The Governor's letter had pained me deeply, for, though he had coughed up, he had done it with a hacking, congested sound. And yet, since he had emigrated from Akron, with his little bundle of Consolidated Groceries pre-

ferred slung over his back, and had had his Sunday-school-superintendent whiskers trimmed down to the captain-of-industry length, he had kept half of Wall Street sleeping with its fortune under the pillow. His clean-up in Consolidated Groceries was so big that the men who chipped into his game out West call him "Con" Spurlock to this day; but he had turned some new ones since which made that look like an allowance for the children. It did seem that the easier he got it, the harder he let go. He was a fond parent all right, but, apparently, it was money he was fond of.

After I had cashed in, I started down town by myself for an evening of quiet introspection. "Look within," as Marcus Aurelius so finely expresses it in the sixth book of his *Thoughts*: "Let neither the peculiar quality of anything nor its value escape thee;" so it was me for the contemplative stunts. I found Philosophy a queer study. It was easy enough to begin, but it was awfully hard to continue. For first you had to go broke, and then you had to learn how to feel sorry for the boys with the coin. I got frightfully twisted about it sometimes.

I stood the show at the Athenæum till a fine antique, with genuine Chippendale legs, came out and began to sing, "They Are Sitting up with

Sister, Oh! He Spurned a Loving Heart,” winding up each verse with a rush of grief to the feet. First she ’d reach for him out in the wings, and then up over her head. If she could have landed on him just once with either hooflet, sister would have been avenged.

It was one of those shows which you take two drinks after, and then a third, slower. That got me to the Touraine. Then, after profound thought, I remembered a lobster in the Dutch Room, but no bear; and when we were turned out — I had met Monty Applethorpe there, one of the Salem Applethorpes — fine, old New England family that sold rum in the fifth generation and buys it in the ninth — I remembered our going over to the Common and thanking the Shaw statue for his public services; and Monty’s crying because the days when a man could lay down his life for the flag were gone; and standing there singing, “My Country, ’tis of Thee” — Monty’s specialty, when he got a few in him, was patriotism — till a cop told us to scat or he ’d pinch us. And I remembered wringing the hand of John L. Sullivan in an all-night hotel and telling him that if our colleges laid more emphasis on training our youth in the manly art, Americans would be a hardier and more resourceful race; and somebody’s yelling, “Trun

out them Ha'voids"; and then dusting off my trousers as I got up off the sidewalk and hailed a seeing-Boston cab.

I did n't just remember buying the stack of blues, but I still had a few of them left when the next rift in the clouds came and the pure light of reason shone through. And I remembered laughing heartily at seeing everyone jump up and begin to climb a rope-ladder to the roof; and I remembered that laugh's dying away in a sucking sound when I looked around and saw a big, brutal cop holding Monty by his left ear and just reaching for mine.

I started in to explain that we were students of Sociology, out gathering material for our theses, but the cop interrupted with, "Cut it out — it's students of diviltry ye are!" which was a fairly sagacious observation for a cop.

Then I remembered Monty's saying in a quiet, dignified way, "Here's my card," and beginning to explain that he was one of the Salem — but the cop cut that out, too, which was lucky for Monty, because by the time he had reached the station-house, he had had another think and had decided that he was one of the Jamaica Plain Joneses — a sensible bit of self-effacement. I had my second guess on the spot, and slipped a twenty in the cop's hand, with "Here's my card,

sergeant"; and he suddenly grew very polite and answered, "I see there's been a mistake in your case, professor"; and he took me down to the basement door and said to the cop on guard, "One of them Ha'voids," and to me, "Hump yourself!"

I humped myself, and that was where I got separated from Monty. The Salem Applethorpes pride themselves on being awfully simple in their tastes, in spite of their wealth, and I suppose Monty figured that it would be cheaper to pay a fine than to tip the sergeant. If you're a Salem Applethorpe, you can be a tight wad and people will only say that you dislike vulgar ostentation, or you can blow it and they'll call you a *bon vivant* and a *connoisseur*. But when you're just two years out from Akron, and button up, people say that you smell with all that tainted money about your person; or if you loosen up to purify yourself with good works, they don't give the credit to you, but to your guilty conscience; or if you start in to reduce the surplus with good times, they call you a cheap spender.

There were a few poor films in the roll along here, for the next thing I remembered was waking up in a car at Harvard Square, and that was where the bear came into the kinetoscope.

A dago was leading her across the square,

taking her home, I suppose, after showing her off. She was a boxing bear, one of the sort that stands up and has a go with her master for the amusement of the thoughtless, and she still had the mitts on her paws. It struck me as awfully pathetic that an animal which had been born to the glad, free life of the wild should be degraded that way, and have to work nights putting up her dukes for a pittance of spaghetti money. So I stopped the dago and reproved him sternly for keeping a bear up so late. He rolled out some rare old Roman curses that sounded as if they might have been used by the populace in the Colosseum. They were new ones to me, and I almost forgot the bear in encouraging the dago to dig deeper into the dead past. Then somehow, as the talk slackened, it came to me as a happy inspiration that while the city of Boston had the magnificent Arnold Arboretum, it was shy of bears with which to stock it. I would buy this denizen of the forest, and bring a little sunshine into its sad life by liberating it next day in the Arboretum, there to start a herd and pass its declining years in the old, wild way. It's strange how a few passed over the larynx will mellow and expand our rude Anglo-Saxon speech, but I was thinking in just that kind of language.

I forgot some more along here, but I must

have bought the bear, all right, for when I reached up and felt for my roll in my waistcoat pocket, I found that what the tiger had n't got, the bear had.

As Epictetus quite sagely observes in the *Enchiridion*, "Men are disturbed not by the things which happen, but by the opinions about the things," and that was me right then. I was not entirely lacking in filial feeling, for I reproached myself bitterly for having locked up the Governor's good money in so slow an asset as a boxing bear. Of course I might have realised if I could have stayed by the bear market. But I was like the bank cashier who, in answer to a hurry-call from his wife to get rich quick, loaded up with Steel Common at fifty, only to find the toboggan greased and the bank examiner at the door. It was up to me to do something quick. Already little brown eyes, having licked up the last of the tar-soap lather, was emitting low, horrid growls. This I took to be the signal for feeding the carnivora.

I could n't wash, and I could n't shave, but I hustled into my clothes, figuring that if I could find food enough, I could keep her quiet until twelve or one that night, when I could snake her out and lose her up the nearest dark alley.

But I did n't know what bears would eat.

Strange how little help a college education is in the practical crises of life. I hunted through Thompson Seton's Biography of a Grizzly, which happened to be on the table, and found that his bear liked berries, but they were not for my little pet in the state of the privy purse, for strawberries were coming from lower Florida and then some by water, and my darling was good for a crate before she moved up to the breakfast-food course.

Suddenly I remembered something I'd heard once, when I was out on Uncle Bill's ranch in Colorado, about bears just lapping up sweet things. So I grabbed an empty suit-case, hiked over to the square, and bought five pounds of candy. On the way home I stopped at a livery-stable and stuffed the suit-case with hay. I took a chance on that, because it's filling, and most big animals like to tuck it away and make spit-balls of it when there's nothing else to do.

I didn't get back a moment too soon. The bear was growling so fiercely that I could hear her out in the hall. At any moment someone who would want explanations might happen along. Of course, there's nothing criminal about keeping a bear in your bathroom, but it's a bit unusual, and I suppose I'm unduly sensitive about appearing odd. Once inside I took a handful of choco-

lates, and, opening the bathroom door a crack, began to call softly, "Bearie, bearie, nice little bearie!"

That was where the Governor almost lost his only son; but I was quick again and Battling Nelson only got a mouthful of doorknob. Then, for adversity was making me a perfect Swiss Family Robinson, I stood on a chair and threw the hay over the transom. She sniffed and sat down on it. I felt like the Duke's son when he has two throws for the estates and has just shaken deuces. I tried a handful of chocolate creams; she shied off, came back to smell — and stayed to suck them up. In a minute I was Madame Zembla, before whose glance the proud monarchs of the jungle quail and tremble.

Still Sappho, as I had christened the sharer of my modest apartments, was plainly thirsty, but she was between me and the water supply. That might have discouraged a naturalist or a prohibitionist. Not me. I looked in the wood-box, found that there were a few left, and lowered a bottle over the transom on a string. Sappho was not only an educated, but a dissipated bear. She was on in a minute. I had introduced the suds to her with a doubting heart, and it had n't a show in the same room with her. Two gurgles and a grunt, and she was up to licking the foam

from her whiskers, and looking up in a way that said plainer than words: "You are so good to me."

I had just passed down the third bottle to her and was wondering how many it took to make a bear good-natured, when I woke up to a rapping on my door, and heard a girl's voice saying: "Knock louder, mamma; he must be in."

Old Spinoza knew his business when he laid down Proposition LXIII. in Part IV. of his Ethics: "He who is led by fear to do good that he may escape evil, is not guided by reason"; but I did n't think of it until a week after Edith and her mother had gone home. Instead, I remembered that they were there in response to an invitation which I had given them to take tea in my rooms that afternoon; and before I could think of anything else to do I had let them in.

I looked next morning and smelt last night, I'm afraid; and I started right in to talk very fast and loud, because Sappho in the bathroom was breathing so hard that I was afraid they would hear her. But they did n't appear to notice anything especially out of the way, and I had the water almost boiling, and we were talking of the Puvis de Chavannes pictures, and the influence of President Eliot on the student body, and all those foolish subjects which come up if

the girl's mother is along, when Sappho let out a frightful snort, and followed that up with a series of little gurgly, grumbly growls. Edith jumped, her mother started, and I coughed in one of those feeble attempts to change the noise. It was an awful moment and my heart skipped two beats, but living in that atmosphere of danger must have quickened my faculties, for I explained in an embarrassed way which made them sorry they'd noticed the racket:

"Plumbing's all out of order; beastly shame the way they're letting the buildings run down."

They blushed, and it went. Sappho simmered off, and it looked as if I were going to get away with it, after all, when bang! and an empty beer bottle came through the transom — and me talking about the Pop. Concerts and the place of music in our efforts to elevate the masses. It was very embarrassing for me as hostess. I did n't cough this time; I laughed — a gibbering, idiot laugh, while Mamma got up, as stately as the Gilt Dome and as stiff as the Sacred Codfish.

"E-dith!"

"Yes, mamma."

"We must be going." Then to me: "You would better attend to your plumbing, young man. It seems to be growing playful." And so they faded out of my life forever.

Oh! What a School for Scandalousness! Compromised by a bear locked up in the bathroom!

I have n't done any forgetting about what happened *that* night, but let me hurry over it: how Monty pounded on the door and finally gave it up with, "Off hitting it up again"; how I fed Sappho chocolate creams, and debated whether it would jolly her along if I opened more beer, or give her a head that would make her crosser; how at one o'clock I peeked through the bathroom door and again just escaped with my life; how Sappho, in her disappointment, tried to climb over the transom to get at me; and how, finally, I settled down in an armchair and dozed, my sleep broken by horrid nightmares, in which Sappho was chasing Edith through the water-pipes into President Eliot's office, where she was going to complain that it was n't healthy for me to sleep in a room with all that sewer gas.

I did n't wake up until nine o'clock, and then it was with the determination to do what I should have done when I first discovered Sappho — to get her out into the hall and leave her in any room that I found empty.

I heated the poker over the spirit lamp, filled my pockets with chocolates, opened the bathroom door, and stood like the hero of a three-sheet circus poster, waiting for the first wild

spring. Nothing sprang. Instead, Sappho walked out like a lap-dog, smelt of me appreciatively, and followed me into the hall. The doors that we passed were all locked, so I dumped the chocolates on the floor in the entry, and, as soon as Sappho got busy with them, put for my first lecture, where I found a secluded nook in the back of the classroom.

The professor was at the blackboard with his back to the class, doing stunts with the binomial theorem, and I was sitting there wondering why he took such a passionate interest in it, when there was a scuffle and a titter on the other side of the room, and I saw Sappho sniffing along up the aisle. One of the most remarkable exhibitions of discipline that I have ever seen followed, for someone raised a warning hand, and all the time that Sappho was shuffling toward the professor not a man batted an eyelid or did a thing to distract her attention.

Step by step the bear progressed. Step by step the professor demonstrated. Would the binomial theorem hold out? Would the professor turn around? It was a ten to one shot, but luck was in the saddle.

It did; he did n't — until Sappho got right up behind him. Then he swung around suddenly, saw her, and threw up his hands to ward her off.

What did he do that for if he did n't want to mix it up? Could n't he see that she was a trained bear? What did he think she wore the mitts for? And what did he expect when he put up his dukes that way? I tried to tell him all this afterward, but he would n't listen. Just flew into a childish, unreasonable rage.

Of course, Sappho thought that he wanted to spar her a few rounds, and it was anything to oblige with her that morning. She was certainly a fine and dandy scrapper. She came right back at him with an upper cut which landed, and then fetched him a left hook under the jaw that made him take the count.

"Seek not that the things which happen should happen as you wish," as Epictetus puts it in the *Enchiridion*; "but wish the things which happen to be as they are, and you will have a tranquil flow of life." Far be it from me knocking so wise a guy as Epictetus, but he certainly called it wrong that time. At least, I've got evidence against him.

Why did n't I run home then and lock myself in my room? Why, oh why, did I butt in? I was one of the first up to the platform, one of the first to assist the professor to his feet. And, as I murmured sympathetic words in his ear, Sappho saw me and made for me.

If she had biffed me one it would have been all right, but she simply fell on my neck and slobbered all over me with the most extravagant demonstrations of affection. It was like having one of those mushy girls dead gone on you and trying to let you see that it's all right, while you wonder how you can put her next to your loathing for her without hurting her feelings. I unclasped Sappho's clinging arms roughly, but she came back; I kicked her shins, and she licked my face; I explained that perhaps she was a bear that I had been kind to when she was a cub; that all bears liked me; that I possessed a strange fascination for animals, and especially intelligent ones. I protested my innocence; I swore that I had never seen this bear before; that I had never in all my life seen any bears except stuffed ones. But the professor simply looked at me with the cold eye of certainty.

Finally, I on my dignity and Sappho on her hind legs, we withdrew, the whole class following and cheering. They attended in a body to the Zoo, where I carried out my original intention, and, in a neat little speech, presented Sappho to the City of Boston.

These are the real facts, for I never lie except to help a friend or to entertain a lady, but when I got back to New York and laid them before

the Governor, he, too, listened coldly. Then he talked warmly. I was a good deal in earnest myself, for while I am no Cassandra, and never yell fire until someone actually picks up the kerosene can and starts for Troy, I had an awful premonition that I was standing on the threshold of the grocery business.

I carried myself quite proudly until I discovered that the Governor really intended to order me into chains and away to the galleys. Then, of course, I tried to make him see the improbability and absurdity of the whole situation. I assured him that the idea of my ever becoming a captain of industry was preposterous; that I was sure I could n't be a captain of limited industry even, but he would n't listen. He was so full of bear that there was no room in him for suggestion, and the only concession which I could get was a change of sentence from the Akron to the Chicago branch. That, a hundred for railway fare, and some good advice — at least he said it was good, though it rang a little hollow to me — was all I took away in exchange for half an hour of brilliant repartee and cogent reasoning.

I certainly did get conned at Harvard. While I was there I put in a year of the hardest kind of work on logic, under the impression that I could go up against the Governor with it and get away

with the prize money right along. Yet the first time I made practical use of it and handed out a syllogism which was a corker, containing major and minor promises to be good that admitted of only one conclusion — a thousand — the Governor went dead against all the rules which my professor told me must be observed by every reasonable person, and arrived at a feeble and fallacious hundred as the answer. That's what comes of arguing with anyone who has n't a trained mind. Even when you've got the best of him, he won't admit it. Even if he's forced to admit it, he's so mad with you for giving him the worst of it that he won't cough up the fruits of victory. So what's the use? I was too disgusted to care what happened to me after I saw how cheap the Governor held me, and I took the first train for Chicago.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL DESCRIBES HIS LIFE IN THE GALLEYS

IF I owned a railroad, I'd have all the trains run ten miles an hour going toward Chicago, and a hundred going away from it. For the hardships which I suffered there during the next two months were simply incredible. The Governor would say, no doubt, that my troubles were of my own making, but I'm sure that no one who knew me would believe that I would make trouble for myself. I didn't have to. That fellow Rawden, who was the head of the Chicago branch, was ninety-nine per cent. of the Trouble Trust, with malice toward all, with charity for none.

I got to Chicago in the afternoon, and settled myself in a comfortable room in the Annex; for I not only held with Carnegie that to die rich was to die disgraced, but I went him one better and maintained that to live poor was to live disgraced. Next morning I rose at eight sharp, as I had heard that Chicago was an early town, and I was determined that, so long as I was in

Porkopolis, I should do as the porkers did. By nine I was on my way to report to Rawden. I don't suppose that a Chicago cab ever carried a load of better intentions, for now that I was in for it, I was determined to follow the illustrious example of Tom Lipton, and other heroes of the grocery business, to whom the Governor had pointed with pride in our final interview. I would do something — or somebody, or die. It's lucky I had a third guess which I overlooked at the moment, or I should be dead.

Aside from some loose ideas on the money question, a sort of B. C. Bryanism, old Epictetus generally dopes it out right. I had occasionally put my wad on him and been thrown, but usually he was my one best bet. As we passed a good-looking hotel, I remembered that somewhere in the *Enchiridion* he says: "When you are going to meet any person, and particularly one of those who are considered to be in a superior condition, place before yourself what Socrates or Zeno would have done in such circumstances, and you will have no difficulty in making a proper use of the occasion." I could n't quite remember what Zeno's specialty was, but I placed Socrates as the boy who made hemlock famous as an appetiser among the ancients. Evidently it was up to me to take a drink, if I would make a good first

impression, so I stopped the cab and sopped up a dry Martini, that being as close as one can get to the classics in Chicago.

I was n't particularly struck with the looks of the branch when I got there. The official smell of Chicago was slightly tempered in the neighbourhood by an odour of roasting coffee, giving an effect like that obtained by a gentleman who bathes infrequently, and as an offset, carries a perfumed handkerchief. But there was no atmosphere of calm or repose about the place. It was a big factory, backed up against the river, with warehouses and offices in front. Every one on the shipping platforms outside seemed frightfully busy. Inside, it looked better, though depressingly busy again. There was a large office on the ground floor, in which at least a hundred clerks were working away as if to overtake their small, but agile salaries. Opening from it were a dozen little rooms. Through the glass doors of these I caught glimpses of some chesty old boys, smoking two-bit cigars and dictating to fair girl stenographers. That looked homey and all right. I chose a blonde.

There was no one sitting at the desk near the door, so I walked by it and into an office marked, "Mr. Rawden, Private." The man who was in there gave me a look out of the corner of his eye,

but kept on writing. It struck me that he was unnaturally busy, busier than any man can be who is really busy, so I sat down, pulled out a paper and began to read. That seemed to annoy him, for he looked up and snapped out:

"How d' you get in here?"

I did n't like his face; I did n't like his manner; and I did n't like his tone; so I answered pleasantly:

"Walked in, sir."

"Well, walk out then, and be quick about it."

"Certainly," I answered. "If you'll send word to the Annex whenever you wish to see me I'll be at your disposal," and I started to leave.

"Stop!" he yelled after me. "What's your name?"

I turned and saw in his eye that he knew it, that he had known it all along, but I remembered that Socrates was a patient cuss, and that he advocated sweetness and light, with an eye skinned for careless base-running, as a better way of putting out an opponent than swatting him over the head with a baseball bat. So I gave Rawden a winning smile and my card.

"What time is this to be reporting for work?" he grumbled, holding the card as if it were an insult.

I saw now that my first impression was correct

and that I was n't going to like this man, but I answered, still patient:

"Nine fifteen, sir, and an hour when no one but the lark and the milkman are doing business back in God's country." That was pretty fresh, and my only excuse for doing it was that I could n't think of anything fresher.

"Don't get gay," he shot back, sticking out his under lip at me, a trick that heightened the naturally unpleasant expression of his face. "We don't have any favourites or stand for any Harvard nonsense in this shop, and the sooner you understand it the better we'll get along together. Your hours are from eight to six, and see that you keep them. I'll set you to work as soon as I get through here," and he started in to look busy again.

He had n't asked me to sit down, but I sat down anyway, and was gratified to note that his scowl deepened. Then, as he had a stump of a cigar between his lips, I lit a cigarette. It was simply great to see him come up — for all the world as if I'd lit a bomb and was watching the fuse sizzle.

"Stop that! Stop that!" he fairly yelled. "We don't allow the clerks to smoke in business hours. We don't allow cigaroot smoking at all."

If I had followed the promptings of my better

nature I should have pasted him then and there, but I restrained myself, for I saw that the Socratic method was the one with which to get the most pleasure with him. Fighting the devil with fire is n't effective, because that 's his element. When one really wants to get gratifying results, one should use a little water, and watch him hiss and sputter under it. So I replied in a soothing tone:

"Certainly, certainly," and dropped my cigarette before continuing: "But does n't it strike you as rather high-handed to say what the men shall smoke at home? Oh! I know," I hurried on, waving my hand genially, "that many laymen hold that cigarettes are more injurious than cigars, but on the other hand, we have the opinion of some of our highest authorities, including the London Lancet——"

"Damn the London Lancet," he interrupted, shoving his face up against mine. "I tell you that we don't allow——" Here he started back as if I'd stung him, and, sniffing suspiciously, wound up: "I smell liquor on your breath. You've been drinking. I might have known it."

I had n't imagined that just one would give me a megaphone breath, and I saw that I should have to be careful with the Chicago benzene whenever I wished to remain incog. Of course I wanted to conform to the customs of the business

world, but it struck me that Rawden was getting sociable altogether too fast. The next thing I knew he 'd be pulling a stomach pump on me to see what I 'd had for breakfast. So I answered, a little sharply.

"Smell again, sir, if it gives you pleasure. And let me add, to save time, that I've been eating too." He fairly gritted his teeth. Then: "You will not drink while you are employed by this house — understand?"

I did n't answer, because I did n't care to lie.

"And we 'll cut this short," he went on, "and get down to work." Then, with a half sneer, "Any preference about what you 'd like to do?"

"Well, I should n't have ventured to suggest it, but as long as you 're so kind, I *have* a preference."

"My place, perhaps?"

"No; I'm afraid I have n't the qualities for that, but I 'd like to have the job which goes with that blonde," and I pointed to a pippin who was pounding the keys just outside his door. I took her for the head of the sugar department.

Of course, the only answer that a gentleman could make to this was a look of scorn. Then, with the manner of one opening the windows to let out a bad smell, Rawden called a subordinate and turned me over to him, with: "This is

Mr. Spurlock. He goes on the billing desk at twenty dollars a week. Break him in." Nit blond stenographer. Then to me: "I hope that I shall hear better reports of you than this interview leads me to expect."

The Governor must have written rather slightly of my abilities to make Rawden so cocky and offensive, for he was the sort of a cur to cringe for a kick, and then to thank me for it, if he had n't been tipped off that I was in disgrace and could n't help or hurt him.

Why do we have penitentiaries when we could get even with criminals by making them do office work? In the two weeks that I was on the billing desk I atoned for all the sins of my present life, and, admitting the Pythagorean theory, squared the account back to the time when I was an innocent trilobite. They had a boy at the door to keep cases on us, and my card was the last one out of the box every crack. It was such a regular thing that if I had n't been on the inside myself, I'd have sworn the game was crooked.

Whenever I tried to get down extra early I caused a scandal in the office. Once I started in to beat the game by going to bed at eight o'clock. About three I was wide awake, and by six I had counted all the sheep in the world and had begun on goats. But I proved the theory sound, because

the next thing I knew it was noon and the hotel management was boosting a boy over the transom to see if I had been asphyxiated.

Then I tried sitting up all night, and I made the office at seven A. M., but while I was waiting for the sluggards to come down to their tasks, I got so drowsy that I fell asleep on the desk. I had had barely forty winks when that cussed Rawden happened by and started in to shake me awake. Now a child should have known better than that, because, as I explained to him afterward, anyone who is at all familiar with the results of recent psychical research knows that the subconscious ego intensely resents being forced to surrender its dominion over the brain to the conscious ego. And after one's conscious ego has spent a quick and hasty night endeavouring to cover the principal points of interest in a large city, it is n't always safe to turn in a hurry call on the brain cells to start billing prunes.

I really thought that I was back in college, with Monty pounding on the door and yelling, "Get up, you pup!" and that I'd just thrown a book at him. But that was all a dream. The real thing was Rawden shaking one fist at me, and wiping the ink off his face with the other — lucky for him that I had swatted him in the chest instead of in the head with the inkwell — while

he yelled to me to go home and sleep off my debauch. Would n't that sting you sharper than a serpent's tooth, if you were trying to win out and please your Governor?

After that, I lived in an endless chain of rough house for a fortnight. The head of my department took the tip from Rawden's manner and gave it to me every time anything went wrong on the desk. I confess that he usually hit it right, for as a bill clerk I was probably the rottenest that ever sat on a high stool. Then Rawden took a crack at me every morning, and sent father a daily chronicle of my doings which must have read like a page from the Police Gazette. Of course, it all worked back to me in impulsive letters from home.

In the meanwhile I had been having trouble with my finances. Money is the root of all evil — perhaps; but it's a cinch that the lack of it is the root of all worry. I had been a star member of the Don't Worry Club all my life. The initiation fee is a roll with a rubber band around it. Then you belong. At the end of my first week in Chicago I had the rubber band, but the roll was outside of it, so I lost my membership. I sent my hotel bill and one or two other matters to father, and while he returned a check for them he told me that he would pay no more bills; that

he expected me to *hunt a boarding-house and live on my salary*, and there was no over-the-left postscript or tear marks on the letter, either.

Now I had been proceeding on the theory that for a fellow who submitted to such indignities all day, nothing was too good at night. It had never occurred to me that father expected me to live on my pitiful salary; in fact I had not even mentioned the matter of remuneration to him in our final talk, taking the higher view that while I was learning to be a captain, he would not permit worry over money matters to distract my attention from business. Of course, I knew a lot of people did live on twenty a week, but I did n't propose to be one of them—at least one of them and a billing clerk, too. That was rubbing it in altogether too deep. However, I saw from the tone of the Governor's letter that he was so wrapped up in the idea of my living on my humble earnings that I must humour him for a while. I must prove that even if I were a dub at sordid detail, I was all to the good where large amounts were concerned. I must show him that there was the making of a sky-high, over-the-hurdles, balk-at-nothing financier in me.

How to raise money? How to get the gilt? How did people raise money? How did Pierpont raise the wind? How did Cassie get away with

the coin? How did the Governor—Why sure! from confiding friends at the bank.

I had brought quite a bundle of letters with me to Chicago, and by the merest chance I had already presented one to father's banker and had dined there. Of course, I was the young prince to him, Mr. Main Squeeze, Junior, heir-apparent to the whole chicory works, but that side of it did n't occur to me then. It might have if I'd stopped to think, but I was in a hurry. In fact, I promised Cabbie a dollar tip, and he burned up the asphalt to the bank.

The president was very gentlemanly about it — took a ninety-day note for two thousand without asking a single prying question, and called me his "dear young friend, whom he hoped to see more of." It was a safe hope, and I told him so. That little interview helped to restore my faith in humanity. Apparently, all business men were n't lacking in the finer feelings.

When I reached the office about eleven, with the stiffening in my backbone that comes from a silent treatment by two thousand in the pistol-pocket, and with a stern determination to buck up now and show them that I was a boy business wonder, I was told to report to Rawden.

Of course, we had a most unpleasant scene. He reproached me bitterly for being late; told

me that in the fortnight since I had gone to work the finest office force in Chicago had become demoralised; that half the men were late every morning. I confessed cheerfully that I was a sound and sincere sleeper, if that was what he meant. He ignored my manly statement, and went on to say that within a week a dozen men had struck him for raises in salary, due to a propaganda of discontent which I had been spreading. I promptly went on record as being of the opinion that ten thousand a year was little enough for a billing clerk. And finally — how my heart leaped, for I hoped that he was leading up to firing me! — in direct disobedience of HIS orders, I had continued to smoke what I pleased, to drink when I pleased, and yesterday I had been seen giving a box of candy to HIS stenographer. This must stop.

My heart sank, for it looked as if I was n't to be fired after all, and I had vowed to stick by the grocery till I set fire to it in my sleep, or they threw me out. He wound up by saying that I would have one more chance, and that if I did n't make good this time the stuff was all off. For the present, he was going to put me out on the street to collect small city accounts. He emphasised "small," to let me see that he was afraid I might embezzle big ones, if they were entrusted to me.

I felt like the prisoner of Chillon, those first few days after he got out of that French Sing Sing. And I went around blinking like an old rounder, trying to get the desk electrics out of my eyes. Then I hired a dandy little runabout by the week, though I did n't obtrude it in the neighbourhood of the office, and chased around from one corner grocery to another, making one boy unpin a ten-spot from the lining of his vest, and another dig up a dollar sixty-three from the stocking. It looked as if being a captain was n't so rotten, after all. But when I'd had a few days of this, I began to find it pretty tiresome. All my stores seemed to be in the slums, and then some of the grocers were absurdly petty and trifling about their bills — said they would have the money next day, or that there was an overcharge, or that the goods were n't right — anything to give me trouble. Besides, I found that there were a lot of amusing things to do in Chicago and lots of bully places to go, after one had located one's old college friends and had been introduced to their sisters.

Little by little I stopped bothering with the grocers who kicked up a fuss — the amounts were small, anyway — and paid the bills out of my own pocket. The cashier told me that I was the best collector the house had ever had, and added

that if I could keep this gait up, I'd be given larger accounts for collection. Of course I discouraged that idea, for I knew my finances would n't stand any such strain. Still, I began to get stuck on myself, and every one except Rawden would have been happy and satisfied if a bull-headed Dutch grocer had n't come into the office one morning and insisted on discussing a bill which I had already paid for him. I tried to shut him up by winking at him, but I only succeeded in making him so indignant that he blurted out: "What for dot young monkey winks unt laughs by me, hey? I tink I pay mein groceries from a house dot haf young mans mit respegdt for deir gustomers."

Rawden, the human hurry-wagon, smelled rough-house of some sort starting, and saw that I was mixed up in it. So he came running. I made a quick, but bum, finish as a star collector right there, and was suspended from all duty with the house, pending the receipt of wired instructions from the Governor. They came with a rush: "Put him to work stencilling boxes in the factory."

I was certainly discouraged. There I was, the only man with the house who was n't afraid of losing his job, and the only one who did n't seem able to lose it. Still, there was a hopeful



“ I tink I puy mein groceries from a house dot haf young mans
mit respegdt for deir gustomers.”

side to the situation. The only thing they could do to me next time would be to fire me. The Governor had made his mistake in not starting me in as manager. Then he 'd have had places enough left on the way down to have kept me with the house for a year or two at least.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL GIVES THE GOVERNOR THE DIRECT COMMAND

I MOVED across the runway into the factory, and joined the pre-Raphaelite school of stencillers. On the whole, I liked it better than the office. The men were n't a bad sort, and they were n't afraid to spit without asking permission, like the clerks. When they were really convinced that I was n't practising art for art's sake, or was n't up to any brotherhood-of-man foolishness, or luck and pluck, start-in-at-the-bottom stunts, but that I was up against it like the rest of them, and working because I had to, they let me buy tubs for them at the Dutchman's, and began to buy back for me, which was final proof that I had won their confidence.

I was docked most of my wages every week for being late, but I was n't worrying about that, so long as my kind old friend who owned the bank did n't bust. He was so easy with the depositors' money that I used to fret a good deal for fear that he might be speculating on the side. Evenings, when I was n't too dogged tired, there was

always a dinner or a dance at the house of some college friend, or friend of his, to go to, though as soon as I reached my room in the Annex I had to take a couple of hot baths and use a quart of benzene to get the lampblack off my hands. Even then, they looked as if they belonged to a plumber's helper. And when I started in to waltz, it smelt as if a touring car were being run across the floor.

Sometimes a sweet young thing would ask how I liked Chicago and what I was doing, and I'd answer, "Stencilling boxes." Of course, she'd come back with, "How perfectly lovely of you!" or, "How plucky!" And when I'd answer, "Not at all," she would protest, "How modest of you!" and I'd let it go at that, because I did n't want to injure my credit. I got into the papers, too, under the heading, "Sterling Stuff in This Boy. Young Spurlock Dons Overalls to Learn Business from Ground Up."

Other times, instead of going back to the Annex, I'd nose around with some of the men from the factory. It was a twister to see how they managed to make ends meet on their wages, though most of them were married and raising an incredible number of children. When I'd see them playing in the streets and alleys, starved and stunted, I'd wonder whether race suicide was n't better than child murder.

Well, things ran on this way for almost a month, and I was beginning to lose all hope of ever being fired, when one noon a new man backed me into a corner and started in to tell me that I was a slave, working for a dog's wages, while old Spurlock back East was rolling so high that he never touched the ground except to pick up a fresh quart. I allowed it was a shame, owned right up to being a slave, and wanted to know what I ought to do about it. Then he told me that he was unionising the works, and that practically all the men had come in. Would I join the union?

Would I join? I've always been ready to join anybody for anything, from a drink up, and the bigger the foolishness, the harder I join. I came back at the organiser like a grass widow getting a sudden proposal from a seventy-year old millionaire Senator. It was the first glint of sunshine that had come into my hard life for two months.

The organiser wanted to back down when he heard that I was young Spurlock — thought that I must be "a hireling and a spy" — but the men would n't stand for my being left out, and I was among those present when the meeting of the new union was called in Plasterers' Hall.

It was simply great to hear them soak it to the Governor. First, I sat there chuckling, but by and by I began to forget the josh end of it that

I had joined for, and to remember my own grievances against the house. When I have three hooters in me and begin to pity myself, I either have to have three more and forget it, or blow off the accumulated language. Before I knew it I was on my feet and speaking. At first I took the hurdles timidly, but little by little, as I got the smell of the kerosene in my nose and felt the tan bark under my feet, I began to go through the hoops with double somersaults. I remembered things I'd heard Bryan called in campaign speeches, fragments of an old college debate on, *Are Unions a Menace to Business?* and Latin lines from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. I let fly with them all at Con. Groceries, and brought down the house. I've heard some bang-up operas in my time, but I've never heard anything that rang so melodiously in my ears as the sound of my own voice that night.

If my gas-works had only blown up, or if a dog-fight had started in the back of the hall, anything to head me off, it would have been all right even then; but my good angel was having her Thursday out, and there was no one to whisper, "Trouble, trouble, dark man coming over the water." I was so doped with my siren song that I steered straight for the rocks, and wound up by asking my fellow workmen whether

they were Chinese coolies or free-born American citizens, and whether they could face their innocent wives and children when they went home that night, unless they had asserted their manhood in a demand for shorter hours and a living wage.

When I finished a thousand lunatics passed me around the hall on their shoulders and cheered me as if I were the young prince and giving away money. It was simply great — till I came out from under the influence.

For ten minutes I was so busy grasping the horny hands of my admirers that I had no chance to pay any attention to what was happening on the platform. Then someone escorted me back there, and I discovered that my comrades had honoured me with their suffrages to the extent of making me chairman of a grievance committee of three, with instructions to wait on Rawden first thing in the morning and to confer with him on recognition of the union, shorter hours and higher wages.

Again they cheered me to the echo, the hollow, empty echo, and oh how cruel, how brutal their silly yelling sounded! Never again can I be conned by "One crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name!" That night I made up my mind that I'd take any glory

that was coming to me thereafter in little easy installments. Even while they were cheering me, I realised that it was no time for temporising, started up to voice a firm refusal to act on the committee, and sat down thanking my friends for the confidence which they had reposed in me!

I tried sheep, goats, and fifty-seven varieties of soothing stunts when I got back to my room in the Annex, but all night I tossed from one side of the bed to the other, and with every toss I had a new thought which scared away a week's sleep. I knew that the Governor remembered Teddy Roosevelt and labour unions in the same prayer — but it was one that he said backward. My trained bear and my labour-saving inventions were going to look like mere peccadilloes, youthful indiscretions, beside this latest monument to my asininity. But I had to see it through. I'd pulled the trigger; and I could n't stand aside and let the men take the kick.

When I got down in the morning, the whole force was massed outside the factory, and I was n't received with cheers either. Instead, there were yells of "Traitor!" "Hang him!" and I found myself surrounded by a lot of men who were competing for a chance to shove under my nose those honest, horny palms which I had grasped so joyously the night before. They

must have seen, though, that I was genuinely bewildered, for I managed, finally, to make them listen long enough to learn that, when they had reported for work, they had found that they were locked out. Rawden had refused to parley with them, even. "And you're the skunk that put it up on us!" shouted one objectionable individual in the crowd, while some fellow-enthusiasts chimed in, "Yes, he done it! Soak it to him good!"

I saw that this was no time for well-chosen words or flowers of speech, so I got right down to facts. "Boys," I said, "the man in this crowd who says that I have n't been on the level is a damned liar, and I'll fight him to a finish right now if the rest of you'll stand by and see fair play. Rawden must have had a spy in that meeting last night, but it was n't me. I stand to lose more than all the rest of you put together, but I'm going to see the thing through, and if you'll stick by me we'll win. But, win or lose, I'm with you for keeps. Come on, and we'll make Rawden show where he stands."

I have my faults, but I'm not a quitter when there's no way to quit. The men must have felt that I meant what I said, because there was no more talk of soaking me, and when I started toward the office, they all followed along. Rawden, backed up by half a dozen cops, received us at the front door.



“Never mind all that, Jack.”

"Mr. Rawden," I began, drawing myself up impressively, and striking the chest notes of the lower octave, "I am here this morning on behalf of my fellow-workmen——"

"Never mind all that, Jack," Rawden cut in, as pleasant and offensively familiar as you please. "You're to take the first train for New York and report to your father. The rest of you are all discharged."

Of course, the yellow dog put it that way so as to queer me with the men. And how they came up! Gad, but it was a near thing for me! There was a moment's dead silence as Rawden ducked back, then a roar, and the crowd sprang for me, like a cageful of hyenas for the last hunk of meat. By using clubs, the cops managed to draw me inside and bolt the door, but not before I'd caught it proper. And all that morning the men hung around outside, ravening for my blood, while Rawden inside grinned and sneered at me. It took a covered patrol-wagon and a dozen cops to ship me off on the Limited to New York. Something of all this got into the papers, of course, but they took the view that I'd helped father do up the union in a rather clever way.

I had plenty of time to think on the train. I'd often had enough for that purpose before, but I'd generally used it in some more amusing

way. This time, though, I really turned the whole thing over carefully, and it seemed to me that, even if the men had rounded on me, I had no right to go back on them until I'd exhausted every means in my power to put them where they had been before I had mixed in their affairs.

It was evening when I got back to God's country, but after a hasty evening along Broadway, I concluded that He must be a non-resident. The next afternoon I called at the Governor's office in Wall Street. The clerks there looked at me in a curious, scared fashion, as if I'd committed some frightful crime for which I was about to pay the death penalty, and the Governor's secretary carried out the illusion by speaking in hushed, awed tones, as if he were administering the last sad rites. This jarred my confidence a little, but I got quick action on my card and was in the private office before I could decide to change my mind and call again later.

I'd thought, up to the moment I saw the Governor, that I was scared half to death; but then I discovered in a flash that I was n't — it was only the pleasant quiver of anticipation which the prospect of a row always brings.

"Well, sir?" he began, boring through me with those sharp gray eyes of his.

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"What's all this I hear about you from the West?" He was beginning to work himself into a passion.

"I don't believe that I can add anything to your information, sir."

"But I can add something to yours. I can tell you that you've disgraced me and disgraced yourself again. I can tell you for the last time that, unless you're through with all this damned nonsense, I'm through with you."

I kept my temper, and met his eye squarely. "Father," I answered, "you're quite right. I have n't done the straight thing by you and I'm ashamed of myself. Help me out this once and I'll follow your orders, no matter what they are."

That mollified him a little. Then it came: "You cut loose from all that damned union business before you left?"

"No, sir, I——"

"No, sir; no, sir! What the devil do you mean by coming here then? You're a striker, understand, and I'll not talk to you, or treat with you, or own you as my son, until you break with that whole gang of ruffians."

"I can't do that, father," I answered. "It would n't be a square deal. It was my foolishness that got the men into this mess, and I've passed

my word that I 'll get them out of it. Come now, Governor," and I descended to wheedling, "give me just this little strike, and I 'll never ask another favour from you. What 's one little strike to you? You can have a dozen others if you want them."

But it did n't go. It was like pouring kerosene on the kitchen fire. "Quick now, you fool; I give you a last chance; decide between me and your union."

"Oh, come, father," I protested; "that 's too ridiculous. There 's no question of any union involved with me, but I 've got to stay out on the strike until you take the rest back." I was getting a little warm myself.

The Governor pushed a bell and the secretary appeared, looking as if some one had kicked him into the room, and as if he expected some one to kick him out of it.

"Give Mr. Spurlock a check for ten thousand dollars and take his receipt for his Aunt Julia Spurlock's legacy." Then to me: "That winds up our business, sir. Mr. Horton will show you out," and before I knew it I had my check and was walking along Wall Street.

It was pretty bad, but not so bad as it would have been without the check. I 'd about given up hope of ever seeing that legacy, because Aunt

Julia had left it in trust, the interest to be paid to me yearly, the principal to be given to me at the Governor's discretion; and he was nothing if not discreet about giving up money.

I was walking along Broadway, when I heard some one behind me yell, "Hello, sporty boy Spur!" and, turning, I found myself face to face with Jim Carson, who had left Harvard the year before to go into the advertising business with his father. Jim was loud and joyous, and all for buying at once. As the same thought had already occurred to me, we were soon comfortably seated and telling each other how good we were, and how fast we'd come up in the business world since we'd left college. But truth is mighty and will prevail. By the time it was up to me to buy back, Jim had slipped down from a partnership in his father's business to his proper place as an advertising copy writer. And when he bought back, I dismounted from my high horse, and owned up to being the hero of a Wall Street melodrama. Jim whistled, but when I mentioned the ten thousand, he allowed that there were alleviating circumstances. "And what now, Sporty Boy?" he asked when he had digested this final fact.

"I've got to go back to Chicago," I answered.

"With real money in your clothes? Nonsense!"

"But you don't understand, Jim. Aunt Julia's coin has got to go into the strike fund, at least all except two thousand." For now that I could n't depend on the Governor to do the proper thing, I'd have to square that little note which my kind old friend had taken.

"Give you poor Aunt Julia's savings to the union! On the dead, Spur, that 's carrying it too far. No wonder the old man got cross with you, if that 's a sample of your nonsense."

"I can't help it Jim; I've got to play the game, even if my cards are bum."

"But they don't want you in it, you chump. Why, from what you've just told me yourself, they'd probably pound you to a pulp while you were trying to hand over the money. Snuff up and forget it."

I had to labour with Jim for half an hour before he would believe that I really meant it. But finally I saw that he was beginning to abandon his sordid attitude toward Aunt Julia's pin-money, for the gloom lifted from his brow and his eyes snapped.

"Spur," he began impressively when I was all through, "do you want to win that strike?"

"Sure I do; what have I been talking about?"

"Then you must stay in New York."

"But the strike's in Chicago, idiot," I answered, beginning to get a little hot at his stupidity.

"Yes; but who is the main squeeze, the whole chicory works, the boy who has the last say in Con. Groceries? Is it, or is it not, your dad? Answer me that."

"Of course it's dad."

"Then there's no use bothering with that Chicago bunch of also-rans. We must work on your Governor. Spur," he wound up triumphantly, "we must give him a psychological impulse."

"Psychological hell!" I answered, but interested all the same. "What are you driving at?"

"This one's on me," he answered, yelling for the waiter and reaching across and wringing my reluctant hand at the same moment. "We've got the Governor stung, Spur. Now listen. We're going to give your dad absent treatment for hardness of the heart. We're going to make the tear of pity start unbidden to his eye. We're going to push him into a corner and tell him to behave. See? It's a grand, a sublime idea, and it's got Dowie backed off the map."

"Go on," I put in, beginning to warm up.

"Well it's this way," Jim continued. "When I want to make people buy a new soap, what do I do? Do I plead with them, beg them, try to persuade them with tears that cost from one to five dollars per pearly, agate tear, to buy that

soap? Nit, not, no. Nittings, nottings, nay-ings. That used to be the gag, when an advertiser wanted to give Mr. Purchaser a psychological impulse toward his soap. Do we do it now? Certainly — not. We give him the direct command, and he buys it like a little child.”

“The direct command!” I broke in. “Say, Jamie boy, do you need a flashlight to see what would happen to anyone who gave the Governor the direct command, or the polite request, or any other old thing?”

“Oh, bosh! I knew you’d say that. They all do when I spring it on ’em for the first time. But let me show you how it works. I buy a column in one of these million a month magazines where space is as valuable as corner lots in heaven, and every word a priceless solitaire in a Tiffany setting. You don’t use that kind of language to hand out goo-goo talk, or to sing lullabies to people. No, sir. You start off with a simple, manly statement to the effect that Soper’s Soap is the purest, the most cleansing, the most emollient, the most antiseptic, the most satisfying and the most durable soap on the market; and you wind up short and crisp: *Take home a cake to-night*. Does he take home a cake to-night? Certainly not. He just says ‘Rats’ and buys the same old inferior article. But every

morning when he opens his daily, and every week when he dips into his weekly, and every month when he looks into his monthly, he gets that direct command, *Take home a cake to-night*. And one night, when he's in a hurry and is n't thinking just what he's doing, he rushes slambang into a drug store and yells: 'Gimme a cake of Soper's Soap.' He has n't had a thing to do with it. The direct command has simply gotten in its deadly work, and given him a psychological impulse, and, by jings! you've made a customer! Now, do you see, you lunkhead?"

It certainly did sound reasonable, and I've never needed much coaxing to sit in any game that had a fair sporting element about it. In a minute I was asking what the ante was.

"Let's see," said Jim; "you've got ten, have n't you? And you've got to cough up two of that for the paper which your foolish old Chicago friend holds. That leaves eight. Then, in case you have to stand a siege, you'd better hold out another. For while I can promise to bring down your dad, I can't promise to make him forgive you for it in a hurry. That leaves seven. Seven — ahem! It might be done for seven, though it would be a near thing. Ye-es, I reckon we could fetch him for seven."

We broke away then, to meet for dinner at

Jim's club, where we were to lay out our plan of campaign. "You see," said Jim as he left me, "the whole game is to get the command into a short, crisp phrase that your dad will understand, but that outsiders won't tumble to. If we do it thorough, we're bound to stir up a lot of talk and excite curiosity, but I'll put everything through our office, so that no one but us two and your dad need know what it all means. The papers won't bother to look into it for a story, because they're so blamed wise they'll think some one is trying to play up a book he's going to spring, or some stale gag like that. But to be on the safe side, and to keep any reporter from getting after you about your part in that Chicago racket, I'll fix it with Tom Carothers to put you up for a week or two, so you won't have to register at a hotel."

It took us a few days to hit on a satisfactory form of the direct command, and to think out enough different ways of conveying it. Jim began at seven sharp, one Monday morning, by calling the Governor to the telephone and shouting into his ear: "*Stop that strike, dad.*" He cussed so fierce that Jim backed away without hanging up. I had fixed it with the butler by giving him ten, and when the eggs were brought to father at breakfast, he saw, neatly lettered on each shell:



F. R. GRUED

"Stop that strike, Dad!"

"Stop that strike, dad." The butler managed to explain it and keep his job, but he told me afterward that, much as he liked me, never again. We had taken a whole page in the Governor's pet paper, and, as soon as he opened it, he saw in enormous black letters, *"Stop that strike, dad."* The direct command stared at him from every bill board along the Sixth Avenue L as he went to his office; greeted him in his mail; was delivered by messengers; sent in telegrams; and finally flashed all night long on the sky, where he could n't miss it whenever he looked out of a window. It was simply great!

Of course, I could n't see how it was working, but on the second day I began to get plenty of indirect testimony. The telephone in the house was disconnected; messenger boys refused to take notes to father's office, even when offered five dollar tips; and letters that bore all the marks of being sacredly confidential were opened by a secretary. On the third, influence had been brought to bear so that the newspaper refused our ads, and the Governor rode to the office in a limousine. But every time he checked us in one direction, Jim sprang a new one on him. That boy was simply tireless in my interests, hardly taking time to eat and sleep.

On the fourth morning, Jim came bustling in

all of a glow. "She's working fine, Spur," he cried as soon as he saw me. "Your dad has had the ads traced to my office, and last night his lawyer called at the house to threaten me. Says he's going to send me up for twenty years for conspiracy, attempted blackmail, and ingrowing toe-nails. I don't believe the Governor can last the week out. We're giving him the psychological impulse of the century!"

"A psychological impulse to lick me on sight," I grumbled, for my private advices about the Governor represented him as being in an absolutely bloodthirsty mood, and travelling at the rate of a mile a minute away from the right answer to the direct command. But Jim reassured me and proved that the Governor's rage was a hopeful sign; that it was simply a scientific impossibility for him to hold out. So by noon we were both at it harder than ever.

When I got back to my room I was so dogged tired that I thought I would stretch out for a little snooze, but I had hardly assumed the first position for taking a well-earned rest when Horton, the Governor's private secretary, burst in on me.

"Oh, Mr. Jack!" he cried when he saw me on the couch. "You must come with me to the house at once."

"What is it?" I asked, sitting up and feeling

good and scared. A picture of the Governor falling in a fit and sending for me, that he might bestow a dying blessing, had flashed through my brain. "What is it? Has anything happened to father?"

"Mr. Spurlock is well, though a trifle er—er—irritated. But a very distressing complication, that calls for your presence at once, has arisen in the unfortunate er—er—differences between you and your father. But I'll answer any further questions as we go along."

Once in the motor, I turned to the secretary and said:

"Now, Horton, tell me; what's all this about?"

"Oh, Mr. Jack," he answered reproachfully, "how can you ask?"

"How can I find out if I don't ask, idiot?" I answered, beginning to feel a little irritated myself.

"It's about the reporters. Oh, Mr. Jack, your father thought you had too much pride to air family differences in the columns of the newspapers!"

"Well, so I have, confound you; what about the reporters? I don't know a blame thing about them."

He saw from my manner that I meant it. "That's very remarkable; very remarkable," he commented. "When your father got home this

evening there were six reporters in the library waiting for him, and each sent up a sealed letter, addressed to him in the handwriting of the er—gentleman who has been so prominent in your recent ah—ah activities. When he broke the seals, he found that each envelope contained a sheet of paper, bearing the single sentence ——”

“*“Stop that strike, dad,”*” I finished.

“Exactly. And, as your father has inferred that you were connected with the er-unfortunate publicity which has been given to that phrase, he, not unnaturally, connected you with the notes and thought he’d better find out how much you’d said before he saw any reporters.”

I saw in a flash what Jim had been up to, and what I did n’t see he told me afterward. Of course, he knew about the Governor’s horror of publicity, and of my determination not to let anything about our differences creep into the papers. More than all else, father would have hated to have it come out that his own son was a bona fide member of a union. Of course, if I went back to Chicago and tried to help the strikers, he took a certain risk, but I reckon he’d figured it out that Rawden had so thoroughly discredited me with them, that I could never get near enough to a union man to explain, or to make him believe me if I did. But he knew that I would n’t have any

trouble about getting a hearing in a New York newspaper. Jim had figured this all out and had dropped in on half a dozen newspaper men, told each of them that Con Spurlock had a big financial story which was about ripe, and had given each a "special letter" that would help him to get the news. I should n't have let Jim do this if I'd known it, but so long as he had done it, I thought it best to see what would happen. So I explained rather chestily to Horton:

"Of course, I did n't send those notes; but it was done by one of my authorised agents."

The motor was run into the garage, and I was smuggled into the house through the back way. The Governor was upstairs simmering and blowing off steam at intervals. Without even a "Good evening," or a "How are you?" he got right down to business; but I noticed that he no longer handled himself as if he were talking to a small boy.

"What have you told those reporters?" he demanded.

"Nothing—yet." I should n't have added that yet; for I would n't have told those reporters a word if I'd lost the game a thousand times over, but it was dog eat dog with both of us.

"Will you agree not to tell them anything — not to tell anyone the truth about this Chicago

affair; not to deny that you were acting as my representative when you stirred up the strike? And will you promise to stop hounding me if ——”

“By Jove, sir, that ’s going altogether too far — to force me to brand myself a sneak like that yellow dog Rawden!”

“That yellow dog Rawden, as you call him, is a good and faithful servant of the house which employs him. You were a traitor to it. But that ’s all beside the point. Will you agree to these terms and call off your reporters?”

“And if I do?”

“I ’ll ring up Rawden on the long-distance and tell him to reinstate the strikers on the old basis.”

“Done,” I answered, starting to turn away. I felt a little choky, and wanted to get out. I was n’t very proud of myself or of my victory, and I was n’t very proud of father, either; yet if he ’d shown just a glimmer of feeling for me in his eyes, I ’d have given in without terms. But his voice was as hard as ever, as he called after me:

“One moment; I should like the reporters to see us together.”

“As you wish,” I answered. So side by side, and smiling, we entered the library where the reporters were waiting.

"Good evening, gentlemen," began the Governor, all urbanity. "My son, Jack," and he nodded toward me. "Now, what's all this about?"

The reporters had been talking together, and, evidently, they themselves had begun to entertain doubts as to what it was all about, but their spokesman led off with:

"Why, we understand, Mr. Spurlock, that you have an important piece of news to give out ——"

The Governor broke into a hearty laugh.

"I'm afraid that some one has been playing a practical joke on you, gentlemen. I have absolutely nothing to say that could be of the slightest interest to the public."

"Perhaps your son," another reporter ventured, scenting a chance for something, "can tell us more about his experiences during the strike in Chicago?"

"I'm sorry," I answered, "but there's nothing that I can add to what has already been published. My father tells me that the whole thing will probably be settled in a day or two, as he has instructed his manager to offer the men their old places on the old terms."

"It never having been my wish or intention," the Governor concluded, "to work a hardship

on the men; but simply to assert my unalterable conviction that the American manufacturer must be left free to run his own business, and the American workman allowed to make his own terms with his employer, without the interference or dictation of any union. Good evening, gentlemen."

As the last reporter filed out, the Governor wiped the smile from his face and turned to me. "I forgot to say," he began, as I picked up my hat, "that, while I have promised to take back all the men, I must make one exception."

"Myself?"

"Yourself!" and the Governor bowed me out.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL MEETS THE MOST
BEAUTIFUL ONE

WERE you ever, revered reader, in a place where you wondered whether you'd rather have a kiss or a ham sandwich? Were you ever so mixed up that you didn't know whether that gone sensation was due to a full heart or an empty stomach? Have you ever waked up and tried to decide which dream you liked better—the one in which the Onliest snuggled up against you and intimated that you were Alpha and Omega, the dearest and the duckiest; or that one in which the waiter is just taking the covers off a double porterhouse, medium, with fresh mushrooms on top and potatoes *au gratin* on the side? Have you ever thought of her sunny curls and “two-sunny-side-up” in the same cerebration? Have you ever been broke and heartbroken the same night? If you have n't, you've never really been up against it. I have been.

Thirty days after my last interview with the Governor, I had decided that, all superficial

evidence of prosperity to the contrary, the country had struck the worst hard times since the panic of ninety-three. That every one in the world except me had the price to eat at Sherry's, simply intensified the business depression. Once I had driven along Fifth Avenue, wondering why every one did n't have money — it was so plentiful. That night I had walked home wondering where in the deuce all those fellows had found enough to build their big houses — it was so scarce. And no one, not even Echo, had answered where; for when a fellow's down, no one, not even Echo, gives a hoot.

This is a cruel world, as any man on his way to the dentist's can find out. Perhaps an acquaintance will stop him for a moment, concealing a heartless snicker behind his hand, as he tells the sufferer that his jaw is swelled up like an eggplant and asks him if it hurts; but, once assured that it does hurt, he hurries on with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes, and a callous, "Better have it out, old man." The whole world is having a good time, attending to its petty business, going to the *matinée*, laughing over its foolish jokes, as if there were no such awful thing in the next block as a pair of forceps, or a low-browed, muscular brute waiting there to pull somebody's darling's face a foot out of plumb. And if a

fellow can't get sympathy for a swollen face that is a perfect signboard of suffering, how can an unostentatious organ — at least mine is unostentatious — like his stomach, expect it?

I won't forget in a hurry how, when I got back to my humble room and bath in the St. Regis, after my first day in the real trouble belt, I sat around listening to the orchestra seven floors down as it played, "Waltz Me Around Again, Willie," to a lot of fellows who were buzzing pretty girls between bites of their fourth meal since morning, utterly oblivious to the fact that, seven floors up, there was a young man who'd go Baa-a-ah! at the sight of a lamb chop. And how, when I'd temporarily exhausted the possibilities in this form of anguish, I'd reflect that, four blocks away, the Most Beautiful One was making up her mind that I was a pup, and that there was no way of changing her decision, because she could prove it.

To explain the Most Beautiful One, I must return to that last vacation before my Alma Mater turned me from her doors and told me that I was no longer a che-ild of hers. I'd been invited to dine with the Stors, rotten rich and deadly dull, and the Governor had intercepted my polite, "Not on your life," and made me change it to a, "Sure thing—de-lichted." How little does youth

appreciate its blessings! as some other man whose meal ticket had just expired once remarked. The grasshopper is n't the only dampfool in the good old summer-time, when the busy little ants are hiving it up against a bull market.

I was the only poor person at the dinner, and the footman would n't have let me in if he had n't been tipped off that I had expectations. It was a gathering of the hope-to-get-in and the almost-in just-rich. Mrs. Storer, standing on a forty-thousand-dollar rug, under a sixty-thousand-dollar near-Raphael, in the hundred-thousand-dollar grand salon of her two-million-dollar chateau — by Bill D'Obbins out of Mansart — and looking with her hawser of pearls and her peck of tasty little Kohinoors like the Queen of the Amazons leading the Grand March, introduced me to over a billion dollars. First there was Riggs — five hundred million, then Nortiger — two hundred million, and consequently only two-fifths as great and as good a man as Riggs, and receiving from every one present only two-fifths as much deference. Last and least came Jones, a shamefaced, ill-at-ease pauper, with only twenty-five million, who had to be deferential to every one. I made a horrid *faux pas* right at the start by speaking in a hundred-million-dollar tone to a two-hundred-million-dollar man, and

was properly snubbed by him. I could n't figure out why I'd been invited, unless they were going to have a small game after dinner and wanted to use me as the buck.

I had just received a fifteen-hundred-dollar sentence from Riggs — his income is a hundred dollars a minute or a second, I forget which — and was handing back a thirty-cent joke in exchange — when my hostess spoke, and turning, I saw Anita Grey for the first time.

She was frightfully conspicuous in that bunch of fat, fussy, plush-upholstered dowagers, for she had n't so much as a diamond butterfly in her coronet of brown braids. But she had the most beautiful violet eyes, and the longest dark lashes, and the clearest white-and-rose skin. Lord! Lord! whenever I think of her as she stood there that night, I want to throw in the *vox humana* and use all the trembly notes in the pipes.

Not that Anita was a simple little village maiden. She was New York — not Pittsburg-New York, but a girl who'd learned to walk on Fifth Avenue, the daughter of poor, but very smart parents, who had brought her up in genteel poverty on the income of a million, in a set where the million should have been the income. So much came to me as I was bowing and murmuring her name, and then I piloted

her over several hundred thousand dollars' worth of rugs and into the hundred-thousand-dollar dining-room, hung with the two-hundred-thousand-dollar not-quite Gobelins. And, on the way, I mentally cast-off, forswore, abjured and utterly repudiated all other girls, past, present or possible.

I suppose I was a little hasty about opening up the subject, but I'd been reading one of those Chambers yarns in which the hero always makes a quick get-away; and then, too, when I thought of the years and years that I had n't known her, and of the chances I'd been taking all through them, it scared me to death. I simply felt that I must n't lose another minute.

"Why have n't I ever met you before?" I demanded in one of those low, tense tones, almost before we were seated. It was a bum start. I'd thought it was a Chambers sentence till I got it out, and then I knew in a minute that I'd been cribbing from Laura Jean Libbey.

Anita looked mildly surprised. "I really don't know," she answered. It was like trying to board an iceberg, but she was a mighty sweet girl at heart, because, as I slipped and floundered around for a new footing, she added, "Perhaps it's because I have n't been out very long." Yet, to my certain knowledge, she'd been "out"

three seasons. And, to her certain knowledge, I'd never been "in."

I got my second wind as we began to eat off the fifty-thousand-dollar gold plate, and mixed it up quite successfully in a general discussion over the outrageous demands of labour. Anita and I, at our end of the table, were in a particularly rich little pocket, and every time anyone opened his mouth the room rang with the flying double eagles. I scored heavily with Riggs, who likes to think that he stands in with the Lord, by quoting from Byron's *Corsair*, "The many still must labour for the one," and telling him he'd find it in Jeremiah li: 1. He was so affected at finding that Jeremiah stood for him that he started to cry into his soup, and then saved five hundred dollars by forcing back the pearly tears, as he told me about the difficulty he was having in making ends meet, without trenching on the capital which his pious enterprises needed. Across the way, the Rector of St. Aurea's, where a pew costs ten thousand a year, and who did n't have an in-curve on his person from his mouth to the end of his waistcoat, sputtered his sympathy through a mouthful of terrapin. He knew a thing or two about the pains and penalties of stewardship himself, for he had sanctified a few million by marrying them.

"Why, Mr. Riggs," he finally got out as he got the terrapin down, "the ingratitude of our working classes passes belief. Every one is prosperous and well paid, and yet the press is full of abominable lies about the labouring man's having difficulty in making ends meet on his wages. I've been rector of St. Aurea's now for ten years, and I've yet to see any of the want and suffering that loose-mouthed ranters talk about here in New York."

"But, Doctor," I ventured, "you did n't expect to find want in St. Aurea's, did you?"

The rector looked vinegar and answered oil: "My dear, dear young friend," and my years dropped from me till I wondered why Mrs. Storer did n't ring for the nurse and have me put to bed, "when you have had the experience of Mr. Riggs and your honoured father in dealing with these questions, you will learn to look below the surface, and not jump to hasty conclusions. It may be true that here and there are isolated cases of want, but they are due in this splendid time of prosperity to regrettable habits of drink and thriftlessness. Capital to-day leaves no excuse for idleness and want. It has a greater mission than mere money-making. It works, if my dear friend Riggs will permit me to say it, *con amore* for the higher good of our beloved country."

"Well, Doctor," I replied, "there's no doubt about the con part, anyway."

I caught an amused gleam in Anita's eyes. But it cost me the votes of Riggs and the rector, who dropped me as a lost soul, and began discussing a plan to further the Lord's work in China by boosting rents in the slum tenements owned by St. Aurea's.

After that I was simply a castaway on a desert island, than which there is no more delightful situation in the world, provided Anita is the other castaway. I was fairly prudent and restrained, and made such good progress that we were on very friendly terms by the time our ices were in front of us. Then Anita, in speaking about the horse show, made some careless, but too, too familiar reference to "Brooke."

I could n't help it. I went up in the air like an old wife happening by the office and discovering her husband dictating to a new blonde peacherino, instead of old reliable.

"Brooke?" I questioned sharply; "Brooke who?"

"Brooke Churchill," she answered, looking amused.

"Oh, the fat little bachelor, who rubbers at the girls from a window of the Ascot Club every afternoon! Friend of your father's?"

Anita had stopped looking amused, but I was so fatuous that I could only see that she was looking pretty in a new way. "Not particularly — but a friend of mine."

"A very good friend?" I persisted, a little alarmed by something unspoken in her tone.

"Why, yes," she smiled; "a very good friend. In fact, I'm half expecting to marry him one of these days."

"You marry that ——" I stammered.

Anita interrupted with a little laugh. Then, very sweetly: "What *is* your class, Mr Spurlock? Naughty——?" and stood up, for Mrs. Storer was giving the signal to the women.

Have you ever, beloved reader, beaten the loud bazoo and invited the Most Beautiful One to come into the big tent and witness an exhibition of your feats of strength and daring? Have you ever buzzed her for two hours, modestly and tactfully intimating, as opportunity offered, that, if she were looking for a kind, considerate, thoughtful husband — a man of broad views, wide experience and large affairs — you were her huckleberry? Have you ever gazed into her timid, violet orbs and handed out beautiful thoughts about being in the true knight business, and that, if there were an opening for a Sir Galahad on her staff, you would like to apply for the

vacancy; only to have her tell you to be a good boy and run along and play with little brother? And have you ever gone home and slowly barbecued yourself on your virtuous couch, basting yourself first on one side by recalling every asinine word you had spoken, and then on the other by remembering every dying-calf glance you had given? If you haven't, you've never been truly refined by suffering. I have been.

I did n't get another chance to talk with Anita that night, but I did the next and the next — in short, I made meeting Anita the business of my life until I was exported to Chicago. And I only went there at all because I had a vague idea, carefully concealed about my person, that I should make a million in a month or two and marry her. If father and the others who have accused me of being lazy and indifferent to business could only have seen how diligently I prosecuted the business of meeting Anita, they would have been proud of me. And I made some progress, too, for we grew to be awfully good friends, and little Brooke Churchill became insanely jealous, though how groundlessly no one knew better than I. Still I humoured his delusion, for it was a pleasure to feel that I was n't doing all the suffering.

Of course, I kept right on meeting Anita after

I got back from Chicago, and then after the Governor and I had our falling out. Altogether, it was six months of the most delicious misery imaginable. I talked with her, laughed with her, danced with her, dined with her, but I never really proposed to her. For at first, when I showed signs of growing sentimental, she had a way of laughing at me which was very disconcerting to a young man who was accustomed to having his proposals taken seriously; and then when I saw, after my break with the governor, that she would throw over Brooke Churchill and marry me, I would n't ask her. I think that she liked me better than Churchill, but I felt that it was first of all a choice between fortunes. After that, it counted with her, no doubt, that the man who went with the Spurlock millions was younger, and had more hair and less girth than the one who went with the Churchill millions; but it hurt me to feel that I was winning on comparative waist measurements.

Anita was n't really mercenary in her ideas. She was the dearest and the sweetest and the most generous girl, and if she had been in a city and a set where girls were allowed to fall in love foolishly and to go in for housekeeping in cottages and all that sort of thing, she could have been just as adorably foolish and impractical as the

next one. But she was a well-bred New York girl, with well-trained emotions and a well-disciplined heart. She 'd been brought up to believe that certain things were absolutely necessary to a well-bred girl's happiness, and that marriage was the art of getting them. After one was suitably married it was time enough to think of falling in love — with some other well-bred girl's husband. No, that is n't fair to Anita — she was n't that sort, at least. I knew she 'd play fair, even if she made a bad bargain, but she did n't propose to make one

I had been taking afternoon tea with Anita one day — since giving the Governor the direct command my principal business had been taking tea with Anita — when I asked her pointblank why she was going to marry Brooke Churchill.

"Of course, it's his money," I suggested, hoping that she would deny it, but prepared to be jealous if she did.

"Of course."

"Is the beggar so rich, then?" I knew he had twenty million.

"Oh! he has n't a swollen fortune, but he's rich enough to afford the simple comforts and an occasional little luxury."

"Like marrying you, for instance?"

"Ye-es; if you care to put it that way."

"I don't care to put it that way; I hate it that way; and you really hate it, too. It's not you, Anita, but it's this rotten New York, that makes us all want things that no sane human being has any use for."

"Is Saul too, among the prophets?" she quoted laughingly. Anita was never serious when I was.

"Yes; if you mean that I'm beginning to see how silly all this rot is, and what an ass I've been to think that it's the main business of life."

I should have told her then about my split-up with the Governor, and that he had disinherited me. I started in to do so — and had another think. As usual, when I have a second think on a matter of principle, I thought wrong.

"Please don't try to convert me," Anita answered. "If it is silly, it's a very pleasant sort of silliness and — I simply can't be poor, and live in the suburbs with two maids, and a hired brougham to pay my calls in."

"But you're not poor, Anita," I protested. "Your governor's got enough to give you everything that any human being ought to have, or has a right to have. Why should you ——"

"Why Jack Spurlock!" Anita broke in; "what's happened to you? I honestly believe you've turned Socialist. And what do you mean by

preaching to me about the blessings of poverty, when you're the most extravagant boy in the world and in training to become sinfully rich?"

Right there I made St. Anthony look like a two-spot, and, for the first time in my life, resisted a temptation that really amounted to something. Anita would have taken my money and me, and if I had gone to the Governor, recanted, and told him that I was engaged to Miss Grey, he would have given me a seven-figure blessing. For, while he was too busy to bother about society himself, the thought that his son was going to marry into one of the really smart New York families would have swelled him up like a boiled prune. But I passed — on the terms — and drew fresh cards.

"I mean it, Anita. I've been doing a whole lot of thinking since I left college — no, don't laugh — and I'm beginning to see some things differently. Throw this fellow over. Why should you marry him?"

"Please don't be tiresome, Jack. I'm marrying him because of the increased cost of living, and from a filial desire to shield my parent from want in his old age. He's such a poor guesser that your father's likely to take his money away from him any day, unless I can persuade him to stay out of Wall Street. He's a perfect simpleton

about business. Ten years ago we really had quite a snug little pile. But since then every one else has been getting ahead, while we've simply been standing still. So we're shockingly poor as things go."

I got out quick. If I'd stayed another five minutes I'd have been engaged to Anita myself, and have gone home miserable because she could bring herself to marry me for the Governor's millions. As it was, I hurried off, raging because she was going to marry Brooke Churchill for his.

I'd been on the hop ever since morning, for being in love with Anita was a strenuous calling, leaving one little leisure for the pleasures that fall to the lot of those who indulge in the peaceful pursuit of commerce. I wondered what one of those self-made men, who brag so vulgarly about the long hours they worked when they were youngsters, would have said if he had ever had to put in a day like mine — sprinting through miles and miles of streets to find Anita in the morning; riding for hours and hours through Central Park to meet Anita in the afternoon; dancing across acres and acres of ball-room floor to see Anita in the evening. I'd been too busy to eat even, that day, so when I got back to the St. Regis, where I'd taken a room after giving the Governor

the direct command, I ordered the last three meals I'd missed and started in to catch up.

When it came to paying the waiter, it struck me that my roll looked shockingly emaciated. I made a hasty count of the surplus as soon as I got to my room, and verified my worst fears. I always do verify them when I indulge my curiosity. The change which I had received from Jim Carson, after paying for the direct command campaign—that last thousand of poor Aunt Julia's legacy—was down to two hundred.

Something must be done, and I could n't do the Governor. Carver, that solemn prig who attended to his legal matters, had been bothering me for a week with an absurd proposal that I go West to Uncle Bill's ranch, be a good Indian, and promise not to leave the reservation without the permission of the Great Father. Of course, that was absurd, and I had told him so, but he had kept on coming back to press the matter. The last time I had spoken so hastily that I had really managed to offend him, which was quite a feat, if he thought you had money or ever might have, and he had n't been back since. I don't imagine that his report had helped me any with the Governor, but that did n't matter. I'd decided to play the game for a while without depending on an ace up my sleeve.

I started right in to be wise as a serpent with what money I had left, and as usual, when I try the serpent act, I got stung. I marched down to the office and paid two weeks in advance on my room — one hundred and forty dollars. It's a wonder I did n't change to the suite with the ten-thousand-dollar bed. Then I crossed Anita off my visiting list, and started in to look for work.

I began by being willing to accept a position, and wound up, inside of a fortnight, by begging for a job. Until I tried to make strangers give up real money for my services, I never dreamed how utterly indifferent people could be to the chance of securing them. Some men would n't listen to me after I told them that I was a Harvard man, and some would n't pay any attention until I did, but both kinds slipped out of my grasp after I explained just what my accomplishments were. I was made to feel that I was no good by every employer in New York, from Pierpont Morgan to Bim the Button-man, and the only difference was that some were more impolite about it than others. They gave me all the reasons then existing for not hiring men, and, to fit my special case, they went on and invented new ones. If I said that I was Con Spurlock's son, that queered me on the go-off,

for why should the young prince be looking for any old job? And if I did n't say that I was Con Spurlock's son, that queered me, too, for I could n't give references. One way I was threatened with arrest as an impostor, and the other I was run off the premises as a suspicious character.

All this time I had been economising, but not fast enough, it turned out. I kept cutting my orders until I got down to an entrée for dinner, but by ten o'clock that night I was so blamed hungry that it cost me five-sixty to ward off a fainting spell. Then flowers are expensive in February, and, while I stuck to my determination not to see Anita, I really could n't bring myself to cut off her violets.

At the end of the week, when my money was all gone, I wore a path to a cosey little hock shop in Sixth Avenue, and wrung the reluctant coin to keep me going from a turnip-hearted Hebrew, until I was down to a business suit, my evening clothes, and the necessary linen. Of course, I could have signed checks at the hotel for a few weeks, but, when they'd finally found out that I could n't pay, the bill would have been sent to the Governor. Or I could have borrowed — till my friends found out that I really needed money. It's a curious thing, but a fellow who's been a

liberal spender finds it awfully hard to borrow when he goes broke. I suppose his friends are afraid he 'll waste it. There was only one man — Jim Carson — that I could go to without it's all working back to father, and I was saving him for the last ditch.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL REACHES THE LAST DITCH

ONE morning I woke up in my ten-dollar-a-day room with a vague feeling that something was going to happen, but I was mistaken. It had happened the night before, when the prince of pawnbrokers had lent me two dollars and I had thrown all my good resolutions to the winds and had gone on a mad beefsteak debauch. Now there's one difference between a beefsteak bat and all other kinds—you're broke just the same, but you don't have to go through your clothes to find it out. I knew before I got up that, unless I'd been burglarised while I slept, I had a solitary, inestimably precious ten-cent piece under my pillow.

I devoted all that morning to a careful and systematic canvass of Sixth Avenue, and, when my researches were over, I had mapped out the most complete little free-lunch route in New York City. I breakfasted finally in the one where the management spread the board with most liberal hand, and I kept right on

breakfasting until a coarse, ill-mannered employee hissed in my ear: "Buy again, Clarence, or it's the bung-starter for yours."

I did n't choose to buy again, nor did I care to have the bung-starter for mine. So I made for the street, without, I trust, showing any undue haste or apprehension, though I could n't resist a glance back over my shoulder as I went through the door. That, I have since learned, was a *faux pas*, and would have warranted the gentlemanly barkeep, had he seen it, in concluding that I was *persona non grata* in our best saloons.

It's curious how a fellow will swallow insults when he's on his uppers, for which he'd lick anyone if he had money in his pocket. "A man's a man for a' that," but he does n't assert it with quite the same conviction when he's lost the guinea stamp.

At six, I dropped by number two on my list, and dined, having due regard this time for the proprieties of the set in which I was moving. Luckily, the place was full of honest working-folk, making their simple preparations to take home their empty dinner-pails full, or to go home full with their empty dinner-pails. It was awfully interesting — quite like a cartoon in Puck, or one of those ripping speeches that Senator Beveridge makes to the populace.

When I got back to the St. Regis, I put on my evening clothes, and sat around the lobby hoping that something, I did n't quite know what and did n't very much care, might turn up to help me out of my hole. But at heart I had the sickening certainty that nothing would; and nothing did, except a bell-boy to touch me for a telephone message that I had n't paid for, and an acquaintance to borrow a hundred. It put me in a glow of pride to think that any one imagined I had the price of a telephone call; and I felt so chesty over being touched for a hundred that the man left with an unshakable conviction that I had it, but was too mean to give up. But my elation soon simmered off, and by ten I would have sold my precious birthright to do as I pleased if only Satan, in the guise of the Governor's lawyer, had happened by to tempt me. Yet, even Satan, who had always been hanging around when I had plenty of money, seemed to have no use for me now that I was broke, which led me to reflect that there must be a good deal of compulsory virtue in the world.

I woke up next morning dreaming that a regal repast was being served to me in bed, so of course I turned over to finish the dream and to order some strawberries which the waiter had overlooked. Just to show what rotten luck I was playing in,

I dreamed the second time that I was starving, and no food within a thousand miles of me. And when I woke up, it was no dream at that.

I was at the last ditch, sure enough, and it was full of mud. So after a refreshing pitcher of Croton water, I shaved and dressed carefully, and started to walk the dreary miles downtown to Jim's. All the way I was haunted by a depressing fear, which grew into a certainty as I got nearer the office, that I should find Jim out of town. It was n't quite so bad as that, but the lazy dog was n't down yet, the boy explained, only he called him Mr. Carson. Probably Jim had been up late the night before, stuffing and guzzling.

I wandered off toward the East Side, killing time and raising a maddening appetite by looking in at restaurant windows and wondering which I'd rather have — the double porterhouse marbled with firm, white fat, or the pair of exhibition canvasbacks. I'd always taken food for granted, but apparently there were conditions under which a man could n't get it except by begging or stealing.

After that morning I can never feel quite the same about some things. I'd missed a meal often enough before, but I'd always known just where it was if I'd wanted to take the trouble to go after it. And I'd been hungry before,

but it had always been a polite hunger. Now, for the first time, I was looking that old wolf Want in the eyes, and beginning vaguely to understand why men lie and cheat and steal for a few pitiful dollars.

It takes a man who's been born rich to be a really tight wad, but I'd often noticed curious and inconsistent streaks of meanness in even the most generous men who'd come up from poverty. Now I knew that it was because a man who has once felt the wolf-fear can never quite forget it. No matter how rich he may become, every now and then he fancies that he sees the wolf skulking in the shadow ahead, waiting for a chance to pull him down. Right there I decided that once I got my rubber band around a neat roll of the needful again, I'd hustle over to the nearest trust company and create a beefsteak endowment fund, with me as the endowee, or whatever they call the boy who draws the tenderloins every quarter.

I was a long way from Jim's office by the time I had worked this out, and in front of one of those cheap restaurants where the waiters are all trained acrobats and the patrons all sword-swallowers. Still, it looked mighty good to me, and the neighbourhood was permeated with such a solid, satisfying smell of fried onions that I hesitated

to leave it. When at last I started to turn away, a small sign, swinging beside the door, caught my eye:

Waiter Wanted

"Waiter wanted," I repeated slowly. "Why not? Waiters eat. By gad, I'll do it; I've got to do it; so here goes," and I dived into the restaurant.

I found the proprietor talking to the lady cashier, who was snapping out her answers on the upward movement of her gum.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked, turning toward me and evidently prepared to answer: "Those eggs were strictly fresh, and you've got to pay for 'em."

"I'm the waiter you're looking for," I replied.

He ran me over with his eye, and I could see that he did n't share my confidence. "A hell of a waiter you are," he finally brought out, and spat his contempt into a handy cuspidor.

"On the contrary," I returned, "I've had experience in some of our best restaurants ——"

"Bein' waited on, by the looks of them nails and the creases in them pants," snapped the lady cashier, though her glance was not altogether unkindly.

I made a mental note to disguise my nails for

the part next time, and admitted: "Well, you 're not so far wrong, but whatever appearances say, I need work, and I need it quick. Give me a show and I'll make good." I talked to the man, but I looked at the girl, for I felt that if I were to get a job it would be with her help. That was where I decided that if I ever had a son he'd be taught plain cooking and waiting, so that when he got out to support his poor old father he would n't have to own up to being a dub at everything except the classic philosophers. Yet that's what I'd started out with to make a living, and without so blame much of *that*.

"Oh, I can't be bothered," the man began impatiently, but the girl cut in.

"Aw, give the gent a show, Bill. Can't you see he's up against it for fair? It won't do no harm to try him till a regular turns up, anyway."

The girl was the real boss, as she always is, and the man finally gave a grumbling assent. "Well, go back and take your coat off and get an apron. We'll try you on," he said. "And tell the chef to give you your breakfast, Ferdinand," the cashier added.

God bless that girl! She chewed gum, which I hate; and wore a rat in her pompadour, which I loathe; and said "I have went," which is the unpardonable sin. Anyway you sized her up

she was in as bad taste as a diamond stud in a dirty shirt, but she was certainly Miss Abou-ben-Adhem with me that day. All the precious memories of life are n't laid away in lavender; one of mine will always be redolent of fried onions. And speaking of precious memories — that breakfast!

After I had exhausted the patience of the cook, and he was a singularly irascible man for one who could have all he wanted to eat, he chased me out on the floor in a clean apron — at least he said it was clean, and it was by comparison with those of the other waiters. The “early lunchers” were already coming in, and the room rang with cries of “One embalmed, with a wreath,” meaning, I discovered, corned-beef hash with a poached egg on top, and similar euphemisms that stirred the spirit of emulation in me.

After all, Pandora's box is n't so very deep, and a fellow has only one set of emotions for all places and all occasions. In my apron I felt very much as I had back in Akron, when I walked out on a ball-room floor wearing my first dress suit — a little sheepish, a little ill-at-ease, and wondering whether every one was n't on to me. First I went over to the cashier for inspection, and she nodded her approval. “You'll do, Ferdinand,” was her comment. “Now take

that gent's order and remember this ain't no Waldorf. Our customers expect the boys to have a little snap and jolly their grub along."

I went to the gentleman and inquired his pleasure with: "Well, Sport, what'll it be?" a form of inquiry which appeared to possess the requisite amount of snap, for he responded with a demand for chops, eggs, and a glass of milk. Thinking to please my patroness by showing her that I had caught the idea, I sang out to the cook, "Baa! Baa! Cluck! Cluck! Moo-o-o!" and glanced fatuously at her for approval. But, instead of beaming back, she called me to her and said: "Cut it out, Ferdinand. Them Call-of-the-Wild dicky-bird stunts is barred in this joint. We ain't runnin' no livery-stable. But everything except nature fakin' goes, just so you remember to always be the gentleman."

I was rather crestfallen, but I promised her to remember, and hurried off to wait on some new customers. And I got along without further breaks until some of my "lunchers" began to pay off. Most of them took their checks to the cashier themselves, but one fellow handed me the money to pay for him. When I brought back the change he picked out a nickel and offered it to me. I really did n't understand what he was up to, so I asked briskly: "What 's that for?"

"For you, of course," was the expansive reply.

Then the full horror of the situation dawned upon me. He was trying to tip me.

"Thanks awfully," I protested, in a panic at the thought of touching that five cents' worth of pollution, "but you really must n't, you know. I'm just as much obliged to you and all that, but it's against the rules, you know."

The man evidently thought that this was some new kind of sarcasm, called forth by dissatisfaction with the size of the tip. His grin shortened to a snarl and his under lip shot out.

"You damn sparrow," he roared, "what d 'yer mean by gettin' gay and insultin' me with that kind of fresh talk? Not enough, hey! I'll give you enough. I'll learn you," and he reached out for me.

I was n't there, but my fist was, and it sent him sprawling, chair and all. Evidently he was a valued patron, for the proprietor hurried to help him to his feet. In the rush of customers for a look at the fight, the cashier, who had left her desk, whispered in my ear: "Back to Broadway for yours, Ferdinand, and hump yourself. His nibs is a fly cop and he'll pinch you sure. Take the back door and do a disappearin' stunt up the alley."

I was still red-hot, but on the whole it seemed

to be sound advice, so I humped myself, shedding my apron and putting on my coat as I passed out. Cautiously, and by devious ways, I worked back toward Jim's office, scared one minute half to death at the narrow escape I'd had from a free ride and some unpleasant notoriety, and exulting the next at the thought that I had so promptly avenged the insult of that proffered tip.

Jim was in his office by this time, but the thoughtless pup had already had his luncheon. "Hello! Sporty Boy," he called as soon as he saw me. "What now? Ain't the Governor doing the doting parent yet? Does he need another swift kick into the path of love and duty?"

Jim and I had always been mighty good friends ever since one night when, as freshmen, we had tried to coax an Angora cat out of a farmer's yard, only to discover that pussy was a skunk. Of course, we had had to see a good deal of each other in the days following, and the friendship thus begun had continued down to that final episode when, as seniors, we had gone in sportive mood to our tailor's, and had ordered some "pants made princess and lined with black satin." He had made them, too, and had threatened to sue us when we balked at paying.

I'd touched Jim a thousand and one times in

the past, the one time being the day that he'd had it to lend, and he had n't entirely ignored me in periods of financial stress. But now, though I'd come to his office with the idea of separating him from a hundred so quickly that the operation would be absolutely painless, and then of telling him my pathetic story, I found myself holding back and even swelling up into my old self. I suppose the breakfast had heartened me, but for some reason, now that I actually needed money, I shrank from borrowing; and now that I had real troubles to tell, I felt an instinctive desire to keep them to myself. So I only answered: "Whatever psychological impulses the Governor may have received from you, Jim, there was n't one to kiss and make up among them; so I'm now reduced to the horrid, if temporary, necessity of going to work."

"You work!" Jim exclaimed. "That's bad. Better try to stick it out. For what can you do, Sporty Boy?"

"Not a blamed thing."

"I thought so; well, we'll have to follow the old prescription, and make an editor of you," and Jim knitted his brows thoughtfully. Then, bringing his fist down on the table: "By jings! the very thing! Here let me feel your bumps," and he made an imaginary pass over my head.

"Just as I supposed — gall — curiosity — imagination — invention — minding other people's business — all highly developed. Reverence — respect — accuracy — practically aborted. This is fine! This is grand! Why, man alive, you're a natural-born reporter. You'll make a wonder — a peach! Come along with me and I'll fix you up in ten minutes."

I felt a little dubious. "Do you really think I could do it, Jim?" I asked. "Now, joshing aside, those fellows who write for the papers are no end sharp and clever."

"Do I really think you could do it?" exploded Jim. "Do I really think a hog can root? Why, Spur, I pledge you my word that you can't help doing it — you were born to do it. It would be a crime not to do it — strangling an infant Horace Greeley in the cradle. Come along, and drop this sweet-young-thing business. Be yourself; be brassy, and Sam'll snap at the chance to get you. He knows the hot stuff when he sees it."

On the way Jim unbosomed himself. One of his friends was the city editor of a yellow newspaper, and it was on him that he proposed to unload me, after enjoining him to keep my relation to Con Spurlock quiet. This was simple enough, as I really knew very few people in New York, having gone direct to Harvard from Akron,

and having been away, of course, through the summer vacations.

Jim's friend was a good fellow, with nice instincts when his profession of yellow journalism permitted, but he did n't seem to share Jim's enthusiasm. Instead, he put forth some extremely discouraging remarks about things being slow, and having to turn away old men. It really seemed a shame to bother him, and I began to apologise for it. But Jim was n't to be put off so lightly. In fact, the only way to put Jim off was to put him out.

"Oh, I know all that, Sam," he returned, waving it aside airily. "But there's always room for a star man on any staff, and you've got to have Spur, really. Your sort through and through — yellow as a pup. He's got it in him," and he tapped his forehead significantly.

I tried to back Jim up by looking intelligent, but Sam's cold, leaden gaze, as he politely, but firmly, explained that he did n't have to have me, and that he simply would n't have me, reduced me to stammering imbecility. "Of course," he wound up carelessly, "if Mr. Spurlock cares to drop into Mrs. Hamilton's ball to-night, and picks up anything that will make a good story, we can use that. We're covering it through the basement, but something good which the servants

don't really get is always likely to break loose at one of her shows, especially when Tom Burnett's around."

"Fine! Fine!" Jim exclaimed. "There's your chance, Spur. You can break in with a bang on this. And, Sam, tip the night editor off to let his story run. He'll get a good one; don't you fret," and before I knew it Jim had me out of the office.

"But, Jim," I protested, as soon as we gained the street, "I don't know Mrs. Hamilton, and I have n't an invitation to her ball."

"But you have a dress suit have n't you? And, if you had an invitation, you would n't feel that you could do this honourably, would you? As it is, you can cut in with a clear conscience. There'll be a crowd, and some people that you know are sure to be there. They'll think that you were invited, and, if you mix it up with them, every one else will. Even if it does come to the worst, you can always think of a way to side-step gracefully. Why, it's like pinching pennies from the blind man's cup on the corner, it's so safe."

"And about as decent," I replied.

All the same I went, and I went hungry, too, for Jim had to hurry off, and in my excitement over the idea of trying the thing on, I clean forgot

to touch him until it was too late. It was easy, too. Crime always was for me. I had n't more than come down stairs — slinking as criminals should, but never do — and tactfully avoided my hostess, before I met some fellows I knew and was introduced by them to some awfully jolly people. I'd have had a bully time if I had n't been so hungry, and could have made myself believe that I was n't a mean, low-down, yellow dog for being there. Tom Burnett, the society cut-up, and a lot of other people about whom I'd been reading all my life, came out between the "turns" of the hired vaudeville "artists" and did some screamingly funny stunts and sprang some bully gags on their friends. But nothing broke loose, as Sam called it, and I began to ask myself what could break loose, in a party of friends, which the public would have a right to know about?

The longer I stayed, the lower I got in my mind, and the more ashamed I was of being there; but between the gnawings of hunger and those of conscience, hunger won in a walk and I decided to stay on for supper. So when the vaudeville was over, I wandered back to the ball-room, where I would be nearer the food belt, and there, sitting in a corner with Brooke Churchill, was Anita.

Brooke looked sulky and Anita bored, at which

I felt a glow of pleasure. My first instinct was to side-step behind a clump of palms, as I did n't care to have Anita see me; for she happened to know that I was n't on Mrs. Hamilton's list of acquaintances. But even as I sought, modestly and discreetly, to efface myself, she caught sight of me, and smiled and bowed. I nodded distantly, started to turn away and walked right up to her.

It was a very curious psychological phenomenon, and one that I have often noticed in moments of great temptation. My mind will be simply adamant to resist, and then my legs will absolutely refuse to obey the sharp, stern order of my brain to take me out of danger. So I said, "Good evening," tried to bow myself away with some conventional phrase, and found, to my dismay, that my rebellious tongue was boldly assuring Anita that it was our waltz. Instead of dissenting, she smiled up radiantly, and lent herself to the little fraud with a "So it is; how stupid of me to forget."

"None but the brave deserve the fair," I thought, as Anita surrendered herself to my guiding arm: "And none but the rich get them," I added, as I caught Brooke Churchill's jealous glare over her shoulder.

I had hardly come to this conclusion before Anita whispered: "Where in the world have

you been all evening, Jack? I've been looking for you everywhere," which struck me as a rather surprising statement; for she must have known that Mrs. Hamilton's was the place of all others in New York where she was the least likely to find me. But, not to be outdone in polite mendacity, I answered: "Searching the house, from cellar to garret, in a vain attempt to find *you*."

"I've so much to tell you," she returned, and then, rather inconsistently, fell silent. I did not venture anything in reply, for who but a fool would want to talk while he was gliding into heaven on a Strauss waltz, holding Anita in his arms.

It might have been an hour later, though I suppose it was only five minutes, when I woke up to find that the music had left us stranded near the door of the palm-room. I started to take Anita back to Brooke Churchill, afraid that if I tried to say "good-night," except in his restraining presence, I might beg her to elope with me instead. But when I had screwed myself up to this agonising pitch of renunciation, I felt that every reasonable claim of conscience had been satisfied, and carefully guided her away from Brooke Churchill. We had just gained the door of the palm-room and were preparing to plunge into its deserted shadows — for almost every one was in the supper-room now — when I felt a light touch on my

shoulder and heard a rather husky voice say: "S'cuse me; one moment," and turning, I found myself face to face with the fly cop who, that very morning, had tried to tip me in Black Bourke's restaurant.

If I had just lived an hour in heaven with Anita, I paid for it now with a week in hell, as I read recognition in that fellow's eyes. I saw myself exposed, disgraced, kicked out, perhaps arrested, and played up as the hero of that yellow story for which I had sneaked in uninvited. And in that silent second the immortal truth was burned into my brain that the time to repent is before it happens. How much of this showed in my face I don't know, for in almost the same second the thought that Anita must n't be mixed up in the mess came to brace me and help clear my face of any emotion except mild surprise. And when I answered, "Certainly, in a moment," my voice was fairly even.

I took Anita to the nearest chair, where I left her with a hasty word of excuse, while I drew the detective aside.

"Now, sir," I began, with as much assurance as I could muster, "what can I do for you?"

"You can come along with me to headquarters without making any disturbance," was the ready and not altogether unexpected answer.

I saw that I was plainly It, and them and those, too, not to mention the dog, but I tried to bluff.

"What in the devil are you talking about? I'm one of Mrs. Hamilton's guests, and so I can't resent this sort of thing here, but I warn you that you are making serious trouble for yourself by your blundering."

"Never mind me, sonny; I'm used to havin' trouble." Then, with a sudden change from the jocose to the fierce: "Forget it and come along with me — see?"

I saw that it was no use unless I appealed to my unconscious host through Anita, and I preferred a quiet exit as a thief to a public exposure as a cad. So I answered: "I suppose I'll have to, unless I want to precipitate an unpleasant scene; but I warn you again that this will have serious consequences for you."

"Cut it; cut it!"

"All right; just let me explain to this young lady and say good ——"

"What's all this about, Jack?" asked Anita at my elbow. She had overheard enough of the conversation to know that something out of the usual was happening.

I answered with the courage that comes from the knowledge that one is backed up against a stone wall. "Nothing much, except that this

fellow has mixed me up with some of his East Side friends, and it seemed simplest to have it out at headquarters."

"Oh!" laughed Anita with sudden comprehension. "You're Mrs. Hamilton's detective, are n't you?"

"Yes, Miss Grey," the detective answered. "And this man is one of the slickest mobs and sneak-thieves in New York."

Anita laughed. "Whose heart has he been stealing now, Mr. Detective?"

The detective began to get a little angry. "You've been conned, Miss Grey. I don't know how he managed to scrape acquaintance with you to-night, but he's all to the bad. We've been wanting him for two or three jobs; I almost nabbed him in Black Bourke's restaurant this mornin'. You can bet that when he's searched we'll find he's made a dozen touches to-night. Have you missed anything?"

I'd often seen Anita angry *at* me, but I'd never seen her angry *for* me. One glimpse of her flushed cheeks and flashing eyes was enough to repay me for the whole unpleasant experience — until I remembered that when she knew the real truth she'd feel nothing but contempt for me.

"Nonsense," she protested; "you've simply made a stupid blunder. This gentleman is Mr.

Spurlock, Jonas Spurlock's son, and a very old friend of mine."

"You're sure, miss, that you're —"

"I'm sure that you're a fool," Anita interrupted viciously.

"But I'm sure of my man," the detective returned obstinately. "And he was going along to headquarters before you backed him up. Would he have done that if he was on the level?"

"To prevent your annoying this young lady, as you are now," I protested.

"You dear Jack," Anita cried. "Were you going to jail to keep me out of the muss? Of course you were." Then to the detective: "Come; we've had quite enough of this. If you can't take my word for Mr. Spurlock's identity, go to Mr. Hamilton and ask him."

I sincerely hoped that he would n't and he did n't. Very much against his will he decided that he was mistaken, grumbled a word of apology and was off, while Anita, with the indifference to supper that is bred of dinner at eight, and an unconsciousness that there can be anyone in the world who has n't had dinner at eight, preceded me into a pleasantly sequestered corner of the deserted ball-room and settled down beside me, repeating between little bursts of laughter, "The cleverest sneak-thief in New York! Oh, Jack!"

I was feeling too low in my mind to care for my share of the fun, so after making one or two feeble rejoinders, I asked, in order to change the subject:

“What was it that you wanted to tell me, Anita?”

“That I’ve broken my engagement with Brooke Churchill,” she answered. “Not because I like him less, but because you’ve been neglecting me shamefully for a fortnight, and you’ve really become a habit with me, Jack.”

I could n’t think of anything to say, though I knew that I must say something quick.

“Ye-es,” I stammered, in a foolish, meaningless way, and without daring to look at her.

“Why don’t you propose to me, Jack?” she asked teasingly.

Only one answer and no explanations go with that question. As I could n’t give it, I tried to side-step with an imbecile joke. “Oh, Anita!” I said; “this is so sudden!”

“Jack,” she began — and there was something in her voice that compelled me to look at her — “I —” Her eyes met mine. Just how much she read in them, I don’t know, but she was too much of a woman not to understand; too much of a thoroughbred to show that she did. “—must say good-night now,” she continued. “Brooke was so tiresome that he gave me a

headache, and you're not bright enough at parlour games to cure it;" and before I could find my tongue she was gone. The break between her words had been almost imperceptible, but in that moment I had lost Anita.

I'd have been a dog had I asked her to marry me, knowing how awkward she'd have found the situation when she learned the truth about me, for of course Anita could n't marry a man without money or expectations. But it hardly seemed a proper reward for the only decent thing I'd done that evening, and the only hard thing I'd ever done, that I should go home feeling like a whipped cur. "That's what comes of amateurs working at being good," I reflected as I left the house, and walked back to the St. Regis.

On the table in my room there were two delayed letters, readdressed from the house by the faithful, but careless, butler.

The first was a little note from Anita that read: "Dear Jack: I want to see you Wednesday night, so I've asked Helen to send you a card to her show. Don't fail me. Anita."

The second was an invitation to Mrs. Helen Hamilton's ball.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL MEETS A BENEVOLENT OLD GENTLEMAN

I CAME to next morning with a shudder. When it's the day that a fellow's going to be married, or to bury a wealthy uncle who's made his will right, I suppose that he can wake up glad of it; but I've never been one to greet the rising sun with song. If ever I become head of a family, I'm afraid I'll start the day by kicking Fido, spanking the twins, and saying impulsive things to Mrs. Spurlock. For when I come out of a long dreamless, it's not to remember that I'm to be Queen of the May, but that I'm It. For some people life is one long day before; for me it's one long morning after.

Standing up, a man's in position to fight, so his sins are careful how they come around finding him out; but lying down, he's defenceless. My troubles came at me from all sides, and soaked it to me till my conscience fairly ached. Proved yourself a bounder — lost Anita — fell down on your assignment — queered yourself with Sam and Jim — spoiled your last chance to get a

job — wasted your Aunt Julia's legacy, and it was more than you can make in a thousand years — missed your supper — going to be turned out on the street to-day — starving — homeless — friendless — penniless — worthless — have n't overlooked a single one of the known ways of making a fool of yourself, have you? Thought up new ones, even! Regular Thomas A. Edison of damphoolishness, ain't you?

I dodged the question and turned over with a groan, only to find myself face to face with the ghosts of those fat days at college when we lived high and stood low; when we perfected ourselves in all the different ways of spending money, without learning a single way of earning it. I even yearned over my lost Chicago job, as I thought of the luxury and pomp in which I could live now on twenty dollars a week. Could I ever again fool anyone into giving me that princely sum for my services? Not unless I found a feeble-minded employer of the feeble-minded, and every one I'd struck so far had had at least sense enough not to want me.

What was it other men had, that I lacked, which enabled them to get jobs? What was it they could do, that I could n't, for which they were paid real money? How did they manage to start out empty-handed and then

come back to their boyhood homes, leading caravans laden with rich stuffs and the coin in dray-loads? I felt a sickening certainty that I could never do it; that if ever I came back, I'd be driving the dray. I saw myself first-assistant on an ash-cart, removing garbage, digging sewers, selling papers, doddering about the almshouse, being buried in the Potter's Field — and then going to hell.

I squirmed over to the other side, away from this awful thought, and then went on to dramatise it. Alone in New York! Not a friend in that great city! Not a penny in his pocket! Midnight on Brooklyn Bridge! Alas! Alas! and he so young and full of promise! Strew the roses and group the set-pieces tastily around the mound. At this climax of misery I gulped, swallowed my Adam's apple — it was the only breakfast fruit in sight — jumped out of bed, and made for the bathroom.

A shave and a dip cheered me mightily. By the time I was dressed and had packed my linen and my evening clothes in a suit-case, I had a plan of campaign mapped out. First, I must escape from the hotel. Sounds simple, so long as I did n't owe a dollar, but Napoleon's passage of the bridge of Lodi, or Teddy's assault on San Juan Hill, looked like buying fame at bargain

rates beside walking out of a New York hotel without tipping a soul.

I fixed it firmly in my mind that if I once let my suit-case get out of my hands I was lost, and bolted for it. I fought my way down to the office, through hall-boys, elevator-boys, and bell-boys who, at every step, leapt like tigers for my bag, some trying to wrest it from me by force, some to coax it away by guile, all solicitous lest I strain myself by so extraordinary an exertion, and reached the goal, flushed and uncomfortable, but victorious. There I gave up my room, explaining that I'd suddenly been called West, guarding my bag the while from attack by two boys who hovered on my flank. I arranged to have my trunk stored until called for, hoping that the porter would n't exert his full strength when he came to lift it, as it might flip up and hit him; for it was empty. This was purely a mental hope, though, and I did n't wait to verify it, but ran the gauntlet to the exit, brushed by the doorman without answering his solicitous "Cab, sir?" and found myself on the Avenue, disgraced, yet safe. I've heard that New York hotels keep a servant for every guest they can accommodate. They must have kept fifty for me.

It was a solemn moment, but I was so delighted that the ordeal of getting out of the hotel was

over that I felt nothing but elation. Tipping is undoubtedly a grave evil — when one does n't tip. Something should be done to stop it, and the man who leads the way in this great reform will deserve a monument — and need, one, too — for he'll starve to death. How vicious, how un-American some things seem when one can't afford to do them!

Treading the familiar primrose path to my little hock-shop on Sixth Avenue — so much of my stuff was hung up there that I really began to feel a proprietary interest in it — I commenced to plan breakfast, for at last I was going to eat again. Fatal mistake to think of pleasure before business was concluded! The Hebrew, seeing my eagerness and divining my appetite, viewed my evening clothes with indifference, my dinner-suit with scorn, and my gold studs with contempt. Twenty-five dollars for the lot, and a bad lot it was. He looked at me significantly, not at the collateral.

I took it, feeling mortified that I owned such pitiful rags, ashamed that I must descend to taking money which was advanced out of sheer goodness of heart, and put for the nearest restaurant. While the steak was cooking, I had two grapefruit, two orders of eggs, two pots of coffee and a little breakfast bacon. I wound up with waffles

and maple syrup, gave the waiter a quarter, stuck a perfecto under my nose, and started out, sassy and snappy, to find a boarding-house.

All boarding-houses looked alike to me, for I'd never been in a New York one. A man told me once that they were like whiskey, only different, because, while they were all bad, some were worse than others. So I tackled the first house where I saw the sign "Rooms With Board" displayed, and asked the slovenly female who answered the bell for the landlady, wondering the while what I should say when I was asked for references. The female looked me over, and answered: "I'm her. Step right in; I just happen to have a lovely room empty."

She relieved me of my bag with a firmness which brooked no opposition, and led the way upstairs to a hall bedroom. Before I saw it, I knew that I had taken it, and no back talk.

"I'm not quite sure how long my business will keep me in the city," I explained in a rather apologetic tone, as I paid twenty dollars in advance for two weeks, "so I shan't send for my trunk just yet."

"Oh! that's all right," my landlady returned expansively, "so long as you pay in advance. The last gent that had this room brought a paper collar and a copy of the Clipper, and got along

quite comfortable for a week. Called one his baggage and the other his library. Quite a joshier, Mr. Wilkens was, but always the gentleman." Then, after telling me the hours for meals, she left me to settle myself in my new quarters.

Well, I was almost broke again, but I was sure of a place to eat and sleep for two weeks at least, and that seemed pretty good to a fellow who'd never looked further ahead than the next day. The goodness, though, was more in the idea than in the fact. In novels, there's always an atmosphere of decayed gentility about the boarding-house in which the poor hero lives. Well, this one had the decayed atmosphere, but there was nothing genteel about it, and never had been. As I looked around my little room, with its dirty carpet and its cheap oak bed and washstand, I decided that any man who started life in such a room was a hero, all right, and that it was up to Carnegie to find him out and pin the largest medal in his collection on his breast.

Dinner was my first meal at the boarding-house, for I spent the day down town in a fruitless search for work. It was slightly past the hour when I reached my room, so, after a hasty freshening up, I sniffed the nutritious atmosphere

in the hall, and, catching a fresh scent of corned-beef and cabbage, followed the trail down to a basement dining-room. A yell of laughter greeted my entrance, and I hesitated in the doorway, angry and disconcerted, until I saw that no one was paying the slightest attention to me. The merriment had not been called forth by anything amusing in my appearance, as my vanity had feared, but by a story which a man sitting at the head of the table was just finishing. The only vacant chair in the room was beside him, and, rather awkwardly, for I felt that my fellow-boarders were taking my measure now, I made my way to it.

Between sips of thin soup and bites of soggy bread, I returned their stares. There were half a dozen young women at the table, some pretty and pert, some pretty and peevish, one homely and good-hearted, no doubt — all rather tired looking. One of the men had long hair and wore a flowing silk tie, another had pink cheeks and a lisp, while a third had a bald head and a plumber's moustache, through which he carefully strained his soup before it went gurgling merrily down his throat.

But, most of all, my neighbour, the storyteller, interested me. As I sat down he greeted me in a slight, but unmistakable Southern accent,

with a polite "Good evenin', suh," and I noticed that he wore a frock coat. "A minister," I thought. "They're all great story-tellers. Looks as if I were going to be under religious influences."

The next moment I modified that opinion, for I overheard my pretty neighbour on the other side saying: "Well, he fined me a day's pay for that, and when I asked him what was the use of bein' a show girl if he would n't give a fellow a show, he said he'd show *me* if he heard another word out of my yap. Then he put me in the back row, and me the best dancer in the bunch. And it was all Jen's jealousy! The idea of that human lard-pail thinkin' she can dance. Ain't she the pudge, though?"

That made me decide that the influences might be worldly, after all; but I was prepared to take them any way they came, just so I had n't struck one of those joints where "we're all just one large family, you know." I had n't had much experience, but I'd had enough to know that when anyone sprang the "just one large family" gag she was going to renig on the grub, or be impertinently curious about my affairs, or insist on my joining young John D.'s Bible-class, or give me the worst of it someway. Ever since I was rusticated in my freshman year, and the Widow Jenkins

made me welcome as a member of the family, and said she 'd be a mother to me, and tried to be, and it cost the Governor a thousand to settle Ysobel Jenkins's breach-of-promise suit, I have preferred to remain a cold and distant stranger.

At this point my diagnosis of the atmosphere's ailment was verified by the appearance of a New England boiled dinner, but it tasted better than the symptoms. Nothing short of dog would have discouraged my appetite. As we ate, I had an opportunity to scrutinise my neighbour more carefully. "Looks like Henry Ward Beecher," I decided at the first glance. "With a dash of H. H. Rogers and Hop. Smith," I added at the second. One moment the lines around his eyes were those of a good-humoured, easy-going man, who 'd laughed his way through life, and every word that dropped from his lips was a lump of sugar. The next, as he warmed up to his subject, his face furrowed with the lines a man gets from trouble and danger, and from facing both, and then the boom of battle sounded in his voice.

"Don't tell me, suh," he was saying to the man with the plumber's moustache. "Life's not even a gamble in this age of commercialism, fo' Fo'tune deals from a brace box. She's no longer blind, but cross-eyed, and she hoodoos every

square man that sits in her game. What show have honesty and frugality, suh? What chance have you and I in business against the Spurlocks and the Harrimans? None, suh! I repeat it — none. No mo' than a Sunday-school teacher at the Brighton track. Not so much, suh; fo' even the veriest tyro at that noble spo't may occasionally pick a winnah. But, not content with nullifyin' the laws of business, the hell-houn's of the System have suspended the operation of the beneficent laws of chance."

It was n't the language of the cloth.

"Just how have they managed to do that, sir?" I ventured respectfully.

"How, suh? How, suh?" and the Southerner transferred his attention to me. "Let me illustrate. One mo'nin', twenty years ago, suh, I was standin' in Hi Bufort's bucket-shop in Memphis, when my friend, Col'nel Sampson, walked in. The Col'nel had a regrettable habit of imbibin' quite freely in the evenin' and then of beginnin' again next mo'nin', befo' his better nature had had an oppo'tunity to assert itself. So he never really caught up with himself. Well, suh, he was feelin' pretty tol'ably comf'table this mo'nin'; in fact, while he could navigate successfully, fo' he never lost control of his members, he could only just stuttah, and he saw

double. Remarkable illustration of the compensations of Natchah, suh, that when a man loses the power of speech, he can see twice as much. Well, suh, the Col'nel walked up to the boa'd; tried to make out the quotations; could n't; spread his legs apart; took deliberate aim, and expectorated at the list of stocks. A very ungen'-manly trick, suh, I grant you; but perhaps a justifiable stratagem under the circumstances. Then he pointed to the spot on the boa'd — he had hit the L. & N. quotation, if I remember rightly — and called out: 'Here you, Hi, buy me thousan' shash of thash,' and, by Geo'ge, suh, that stock never *did* stop going up. Made his everlastin' fo'tune fo' him. Now, suh, could that happen under the present system?"

"Why," I admitted, "I don't just exactly see the connection."

"Don't see the connection, suh? It's perfectly plain. In those days speculation was a gentleman's game, with a fair spo'tin' element in it. Now, suh, it's played with loaded dice, by a lot of sho't card men, who 'd rob an intoxicated gentleman without the slightest compunction. Do I make myself clear, suh?"

I was rather dazed by the Southerner's logic, but he carried it off with such fire and conviction that I could only murmur an assent — I hate

fool arguments anyway — and ask him if there were no remedy for this parlous state of affairs.

“Our honoured President will find a way, suh,” he returned with decision. “A great and good man, though not of my political faith. I have a most profound admiration for him, despite the unfo’tunate and ill-advised Booker T. Washington incident. He has my confidence, suh.”

We had finished our dinner, and were leaving the dining-room, when my neighbour turned back to me and said cordially: “I should be glad to continue our conversation, if you will honah me with yo’ company in my apartment, Mr. —,” and he paused for me to supply the name.

“Spurlock, sir — Jack Spurlock,” I answered. “I shall be delighted to accept your invitation.”

“A name not unconnected with our topic,” was his comment.

“If you mean money, it’s quite unconnected with it in my person,” I replied lightly.

“A lack we have in common, suh,” he answered with a slight bow. “My name is Jackson — Majah Geo’ge Magoffin Jackson, suh, of Bowlin’ Green, Kentucky.”

“A soldier, Major?”

“Of the late unpleasantness, suh; but now of Fo’tune, or perhaps mo’ accurately, of Misfo’tune.”

"Brothers in arms," I laughed, and that was how my friendship with the Major began.

He had a bully, big room, though it was shabbily furnished, and a trunk, which seemed very grand and opulent to me. He planted me in the easiest chair, gave me a real cigar, and brought out a bottle of Bourbon. "Say when, suh," he requested as he began to pour.

"I'll take mine with water, if you please," I interrupted.

The Major set down the bottle and hunted up a tumbler.

"A degenerate age," he commented sadly. "An era of dilution — watered honah; watered stocks; watered whiskey. I beg yo' pa'don, suh; I meant nothin' personal."

"Don't mind me, Major," I replied cheerfully. "I guess you've called it," and I lifted my glass.

The Major raised his, inclined it toward me and tossed off his drink with, "Yo' health, suh." There was no concession to the spirit of the age on his part, either before or after the operation. He took his straight.

I set mine down untasted. For, as I smelt the whiskey I decided that I did n't want it, and that it was plain foolishness at this stage of the game to take on a habit which most employers did n't seem to like. Then, too, for several days

I'd been wondering vaguely whether there might n't be some rewards handed out nearer than heaven for this be-good business. An old hand at virtue would have reformed either before or after accepting the drink, but my good resolutions are nothing if not *de trop*.

The Major, seeing that I was slighting his liquor, promptly resented the implied reflection on its quality.

"Have no fears, suh," he explained a little stiffly. "It's from home, and the best that the old State can do."

"It is n't that," I answered, rather shamefacedly; "but I'm up against it now, and I don't believe that it's good business to drink under the circumstances. In fact, I think I'll cut it out for keeps."

"A wise decision," the Major returned. "I admire, I honah you fo' it," and he dismissed the subject with a flourish. I yearned to explain further, for I could see plainly that he thought I had a weakness for rum. But I refrained, realising the hopelessness of making a man of the Major's training understand that there could be any reason, except a depraved appetite, for abstaining from a beverage which he regarded as one of the choicest blessings of Providence. So we passed on to other subjects, and, under his

sympathetic questioning, I told him, with judicious reservations, enough of my story to lead him to believe that I was a young man of good family, who, owing to his father's death had had to leave college and hunt for work.

"A terrible indictment of modern conditions!" he exclaimed, when I had finished. "A hellish system, suh, under which a gentleman of birth and breedin', a young man of intelligence and parts, if you will permit me to say it to yo' face, suh, cannot find honourable employment! Perhaps, though at the moment my own circumstances are none too prosperous, I may be able to suggest somethin'. If nothing better offers," he added musingly, "there is always Lah Grip-pah."

"Lah what?" I asked.

"Lah Grippah," he repeated. "My simple remedy fo' simpletons. The name, of cou'se, is an adaptation from the French fo' influenza. I have found it a useful crutch in periods of adversity."

I could n't believe my ears. "A medicine that you sell?" I questioned.

"Exactly, my deah boy, when all other means of makin' an honest livelihood fail me temporarily. Not that makin' money's hard; any child can do that, but keepin' it's a grown man's game."

"But selling this Lah Grippah is n't your regular business?" I persisted, a little rudely.

"No, suh," the Major replied. "In my time I've played many parts and many games."

"I suppose, Major," I ventured, bent on finding out what the old fellow really did do for a living, "that the late unpleasantness, which had so much to do with changing conditions in the South, cost you your property?"

"On the contrary, suh, it did n't cost me a dollar. In fact, though at times I have found myself possessed of considerable sums of ready money, I have never been a man of prope'ty in the strict sense of the word. I abandoned my profession, the law — a jealous mistress, suh, and I was fickle — befo' the wah, as I did not find its practice so lucrative as I had hoped. Fo' some years thereafter I travelled, largely on the Mississippi River. It was the decline in steam-boatn', suh, the adoption of less leisurely methods of travel, that cut into my income and fo'ced me to come No'th and engage in trade. Befo' this blank era of distrust and commercialism one could always find gentlemen ready and anxious to play. But the System has spared nothin', suh. It has debased our national games, even. Sharpers sit around the poker table. Invention has busied itself with the faro box. A so'did

and cold-blooded generation yells for the police when asked to take a hand in a friendly little game."

"Yes, I know," I nodded sympathetically. "But after the river played out and faro became an exact science, how did you make out then?"

"In various ways, suh — some good, some bad, all honest. A man with his wits about him can always find enough people who've lost their's to earn an honest dollar when he needs one. Just now my funds are tol'ably low, owin' to an unfo'tunate speculation in Bibles."

"In Bibles!" I exclaimed, my curiosity aroused again, as I saw my chameleon changing back into a minister. "How's that?"

"A most ill-advised undertakin', suh, and a departure from principle fo' which I was prope'ly punished. I was just back from a lucrative tour with Lah Grippah, fo' the weather had been singularly propitious, so much so that when I would assemble an audience I could sca'cely make myself heard fo' the blowin' of noses. But, while I was in no immediate want, I have reached a time of life, suh, when a gentleman begins to develop an insatiable curiosity to know who is goin' to pay his boa'd bill next month. An evenin' at stud poker — a noble game, suh, when played under proper auspices — from

which, through a belated smile of fo'tune in the shape of fo' aces, I escaped sho't of complete disaster, hastened my decision. I have regretted since, suh, that I did not lose my money like a gentleman, instead of fritterin' it away tryin' to elevate a race which I am inclined to think deserves its misfo'tunes."

"But if Lah Grippah is such a cinch," I interrupted, "why don't you keep right along with that?"

"Lah Grippah is, as you observe, tol'ably certain," the Major returned with an access of dignity, "but the — er — publicity attendant on dispensin' it to the — er — afflicted is most unpleasant to me. In huntin' fo' somethin' mo' in keepin' with my tastes, somethin' of a speculative natchah, which affo'ded a wider margin fo' profit or loss, I called on a publisher with whom I had once done a stroke of business, introducin' to our people that wonde'ful volume, the Martahs of the Confederacy, a complete history of the Lost Cause and its heroes, stimulatn', educational and patriotic, yet as entertainin' as a novel.

"I digress, suh, but I can never think of that admirable volume without my enthusiasm runnin' away with me. I may have mentioned to you, suh, that I had the honah of servin' under the gallant and universally-beloved Buckner durin' the late wah. A great general, a peerless leader, suh!

“Well, in pokin’ around among the publisher’s stock I came across the unbound sheets of a tremenjous big book, bigger than an unabridged Webster. That looked promisin’, fo’ it has been my experience that our people want to buy their prose by the pound and their po’try by the wrapper.

“‘What ’s that, suh?’ I asked of the publisher, pointing at the pile with my stick.

“‘Bibles, Majah,’ he answered. ‘Family Bibles, and I wish I could find the families. They ’d hardly interest you, though. Quiet readin’. Not up to date and snappy enough fo’ yo’ trade.’

“‘But they do interest me, suh,’ I replied. ‘There ought to be right smart of a trade fo’ a book as big as that.’

“‘Nothin’ doin’, Majah,’ was his discouragin’ comment. ‘We ’re stung on ’em. Used to be so that every jay in the country had to have one in the best room along with the wax pond-lilies and the crayon of grandpop, the human billygoat. Now they ’re plum out of style. No demand except fo’ po’table sizes a la Oxford. Had ’em ten years, and could n’t sell ’em to a Chink in an infant class.’

“It was the word ‘Chink’ that did it.

“‘But, by Geo’ge, suh, I can sell them,’ I said,

bangin' my stick down with one of those sudden inspirations that I have so often found a sou'ce of profit in the past. 'If you 'll illustrate them fo' me I 'll take the whole blank lot.'

"Well, suh, in ten minutes I was the possessor of a thousand Bibles, big enough to fill a box-cah, which I proposed to make a powe'ful means fo' good in my home State, and incidentally to one of its deservin' sons. The publisher agreed to bind them in plush fo' me and to illustrate them profusely with coloured angels."

"Was there anything very novel about that?" I interrupted. "It seems to me I 've seen Bibles with coloured illustrations somewhere."

"Not with my kind of coloured illustrations, suh," the Major returned, smiling indulgently. "My angels were to be blue-black, and saddle-coloured, and gingah-coloured — any shade but white. In sho 't, suh, they were to be coons, and, as you may have observed, the Afro-American carries his instability and fickleness of character even into the matter of his colour. I aimed to fetch all shades. That was the nubbin of my idea, suh."

"Coons! You mean that the illustrations were to be of Negro angels?" I asked, not quite grasping the idea as yet.

"Exactly, suh. Well, to proceed: I placed

myself in communication with a friend in Kentucky, and learned that there was sho'tly to be a big nigger camp-meetin' at Hominy Run; so I shipped my Bibles there and followed them in person. You begin to sense the idea, suh? You begin to apprehend a certain blank novelty in the conception?"

I admitted that I was beginning both to sense the idea and to apprehend a certain blank novelty. "You ought to have added a rag-time hymn-book to your line," I suggested.

"Not a bad idea, suh," the Major replied, pausing as if to make a mental note of it before he continued.

"Well, there must have been five thousand singin', shoutin', watermelon-eatin' niggers at that camp-meetin', and there seemed to be a good deal of money circulatin'. It sho'ly did look promisin', though I confess that I did not relish the thought of descendin' to doin' business with niggers, even though it was largely of a missionary character. I have no prejudice against the African, suh, in his proper place as a servant; but I have always felt that a grave mistake was made in admittin' him to the ballot and the privileges of a citizenship fo' which he is totally unfitted by natchah. Fo'tunately, the thought of our best people has found a way to stop in-

judicious and indiscriminate votin'. I need not remind a gentleman of yo' education that the Anglo-Saxon race will never brook Negro domination.

"The familia'ty and insolence with which I was treated while I was making my arrangements to set up on the grounds fairly made my blood boil, but I remembered that my mission was of a semi-religious natchah, and so managed to appear ca'm throughout that tryin' ordeal.

"When my stand was ready and my Bibles stacked up, I had no difficulty in attractin' a crowd; in fact, some nigger passed the word around that I was a white bishop, who had come to preach to them, and I blush to confess that I humoured them in the delusion. I painted an eloquent and movin' picture of the wrongs that the African had suffered in ancient times as a subject race, drawin' freely on the Old Testament fo' illustration, and the Amens began poppin' all over the crowd. As I warmed up, I reckon I hollered a little, fo' the first thing I knew I had an old Auntie wavin' toward me through the crowd, shoutin' 'Glory; I'se got it!' I was strongly tempted to stop right there and make a first sale, but I decided that I'd better get them comin' a little stronger. So I kept on to slavery times in our beloved Southland, intendin', I blush to

say, to slander that halcyon period of our country's history fo' the sake of a few paltry dollars. But, as I thought of the old days, I found myself drawin' a picture of the care-free lives that the slaves had led on the old plantation, with the banjos twangin' and the fried chicken and hog-meat passin' round, which moved me to tears, and was not, I think I may say, entirely wasted on the mo' intelligent members of my audience. I am afraid, though, that I made mo' mouths than eyes water, fo' I have been told that I have a singularly felicitous manner of describin' the delights of the table. Comin' to my climax, I showed them how, since the wah, they had been slighted in science and art and literature, and even in religion; how, in sho't, everything was now in the hands of double-faced Yankees, who, while pretendin' to love the Negro, were really his worst enemies, carryin' their secret animosity into the printin' of his Bible even. But this great wrong was now to be righted. I had come to this camp-meetin', representin' an association of benevolent Southern gentlemen, who, as a pure labour of love, and at great expense to themselves, had prepared an edition of the Bible in which the coloured race was, fo' the first time, treated fairly. These Bibles I would distribute among them at a purely nominal charge, barely

sufficient to cover cost of packin' and freight. The books themselves were really a free gift — a splendid, a glorious, an upliftin' philanthropy.

"Well, suh, that crowd fairly Amen-ed and Hallelujah-ed itself hoarse, and, seizin' the psychological moment, I motioned to my assistants to pass around the Bibles. It looked as if I were goin' to reap a rich reward fo' my labours. The coons fairly fell over themselves reachin' fo' the books, but as soon as they looked at the pictures, their demeanah underwent an extrao'dinary change. Instead of manifestin' the pleasure I had a right to expect, suh, as some slight return fo' my thoughtfulness, they simply passed the books back to my assistants and melted away. Almost befo' I knew it, I was alone with my two assistants, my thousand Bibles and one old darky, and he was startin' to hobble off. I was simply astounded — astounded and insulted, suh, at receivin' such treatment from a parcel of blank niggers. But I had too much at stake to resent the outrage as it should have been resented, suh — with my stick. So I called after the old darky:

"Hi, there, uncle; you come back here!"

"The old fellow hobbled up to me reluctantly.

"What's the matter with those rascally niggers?" I questioned sharply, fo' my temper was a trifle on edge. 'What do they mean by

runnin' away from these Bibles, after a lot of kind, charitable gentlemen have gone to all this trouble and expense fo' them? Do they reckon I've got nothin' to do but stand around here shoutin' myself hoarse to amuse a pack of black scalawags?

"I reckon dey did n't like de picters, boss," the darky answered.

"I sho'ly was irritated now. 'Did n't like the pictures?' I shouted. 'What was the matter with those pictures, you black scoundrel? You answer me that — quick!'

"Well, boss," he replied, with a conciliatory smile, 'it's dish yere way. Dem picters ain't dezackly' accordin' to our understandin' ob de hereafter. Our pasture has done promised us niggers dat we'll all be white in heben, and we jest natchelly won't buy no Jim-Crow Bibles.'

"And, by Geo'ge, suh!" the Major concluded, swelling with rage at the remembrance of his wrongs, "the old fellow was right. I'd have had to work my way back here with Lah Grip-pah, if I had n't finally managed to sell the Bibles, on the strength of their size and plush covers, fo' two-bits apiece, after tearin' out the pictures. I was richly punished, suh, but I deserved it, and the experience has confirmed me in my impression that any attempt at social or business

relations between the two races is most vicious and ill-advised. The African is not fitted, either by natchah or by trainin', to accept our civilisation, suh."

It was almost midnight when the Major and I separated, with mutual expressions of pleasure in our new acquaintance. I went to my dingy little room and crept in between the damp sheets, grinning a little over the Major, but mightily cheered, all the same, at having made a first friend in my new world. For the Major's last words as we parted had been: "Give yo'self no concern about yo' finances, my deah boy. The Lo'd will provide." And then, as if to lend this pious assurance some substantial backing, he added: "And if He does n't, I will, suh. The world is full of ideas, and ideas are money — if you get hold of the right ideas. We 're a good pair, suh, and we 'll draw to our hand."

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL HAS A SURPRISING ADVENTURE

AFTER what happened during the next few days I should have felt like going straight to the devil, if I had n't already gone and had n't been so busy trying to get back. Then, too, it takes money to make the trip properly, and having once travelled *de luxe* on the downward path, I did n't fancy a Coney Island excursion over the same route.

My luck would have made a courageous gambler hang himself. I am not superstitious, but I know a hoodoo when I see one, and it does n't have to be cross-eyed and have thirteen burned in the skin at that. And I had a hoodoo that was twins. There 's a curious disease that some women have called cat-fear. When one who has it finds poor pussy straying about the house, she acts as if she 'd discovered a burglar under the bed. Well, mine is bear-fear. The first time a bear got me into trouble, I was willing to believe that it was an accident, but now I know that bears are worse luck for me than corns for Cinderella,

with the courtly young salesman kneeling at her feet and saying, "Let me try on this number two, miss."

It was almost nine o'clock when I got down to breakfast the morning after my first meeting with the Major, and I found that a tall and very slim young woman and the Major were the only occupants of the room. After they had given me good morning, the slim young woman withdrew almost immediately, looking, because of the extraordinarily tight skirt that she wore, like a single leg stalking haughtily out of the room.

The Major followed her with a compassionate glance. "A most unfo'tunate case, suh," he explained. "Too tall fo' the Merry, Merry Madcap Maids ballet; too narrow fo' the Happy, Healthy Hottentots Are We song. And when she asked fo' a place in the May-Day dance, the insultin' hound of a manager allowed that she could be the Maypole. It makes my blood boil, suh, to think of a refined and high-toned young lady like that bein' subjected to such dastardly insinuations. We must try to help her, Jack."

"Is she hard up?" I questioned, grinning as I thought of the dollar-seventy that constituted my own cash assets.

"Not fo' money, suh," the Major replied,

glaring reprovingly at me; "but fo' sympathy, fo' encouragement, fo' some one who won't laugh at her foolish little hopes and ambitions; fo' some one, suh, to whose eye the tear of -- er -- compassion is not a stranger; who will, in sho't, appreciate the duties and -- er -- responsibilities of chivalrous manhood toward unprotected and -- er --- distressed womanhood," and the Major sputtered out his peroration in a fine spray.

"Quite right, Major," I answered, dexterously dodging his flowers of speech. "I really was n't smiling at the young lady's troubles, but at my own."

"A very proper attitude toward them, suh," the Major commented, relaxing into good humour again, and talking with less hydraulic pressure behind his words. "A gentleman should always laugh at his own troubles; but never at another's. Would it seem indelicate, suh, if I inquired into the condition of yo' finances?"

"Not indelicate of you to inquire, Major, but most indelicate of me to refer to anything that has fallen so low. I'm down to one-seventy and these mementos of my past," and I produced a bundle of pawntickets that would have choked a cow, though I have never heard of that rather mercenary animal being verbally choked on anything except a roll of greenbacks.

The Major's good humour expanded into a



"An' when she asked fo' a place in the May-day Dance, the insultin' bound of a manager allowed that she could be the May-pole."

broad grin. "By Geo'ge, suh," he commented, "you have not been idle."

"On the contrary, Major," I answered, "I have been, and that's why I have this collection of souvenir postals."

The Major took the bundle and skinned it as if it were a hand at poker. "We must have this out, my deah boy," he said, pausing at a ticket marked, "One D. suit." "The rest can wait till Fo'tune deals us somethin' better than deuces; but evenin' clothes are capital in New York. In this town, Oppo'tunity does n't go to bed with the chickens. She's as likely to knock at our do' after six as befo', and to request the pleasure of our company on Fifth Avenue as on Sixth. We must, like good soldiers, be ready fo' the call of duty, suh."

"But, Major," I stammered, not quite knowing how to refuse an offer made in so kindly a spirit, particularly as I'd never made a specialty of refusing things; "it's awfully bully of you to want to do this for me, but I'm starting out right now to hunt for a job; so I hope I won't need to take advantage of your generosity."

"A job, suh?" the Major questioned, swelling up into his majestic manner again — "A job, suh? And what kind of a job, might I venture to inquire?"

"Any kind of a job," I replied, feeling from something in my companion's tone that I was making a degrading and incriminating confession.

"You amaze me, Jack," was his comment. "I respect, I honah, I admire yo' pluck, but I deprecate the suicidal resolution to which it has brought you. Why, suh, the first thing you know, you will find yo'self engaged in the lowest fo'ms of mercantile pursuits, pushin' a pen, poundin' a typewriter, hoppin' to do the biddin' of some jackanapes who has no higher ambition than note shavin', or buyin' and sellin' fo' a picayune, hucksterin' profit. I repeat it in all sincerity, Jack -- you amaze me."

I began to feel a little amazed myself that I had even contemplated taking one of these pitiful jobs.

"But what can a fellow do, Major?" I inquired apologetically. "Everybody says that a man must start in at the bottom in business, and work up. How else can he learn?"

"Everybody lies, then," the Major thundered. "Look at me, suh! Did I ever start in at the bottom of anythin'? Never, suh!"

It occurred to me that he 'd never got to the top of anything, but I repelled the unworthy thought, and replied:

"That may be, but I tried starting in at the

top, and I came down and through and out in China, much to the displeasure of the Chinks. I'm afraid that my business head is a cabbage, and, after all, somebody has to be a clerk."

"Yes, suh, somebody has to be, but let it be somebody else," the Major retorted. "Can't you see, my deah boy, that, if you have no head fo' business, under no circumstances should you consider engagin' in trade, especially in a menial capacity? If you had capital, suh, yo' inaptitude fo' commerce would not be a matter of any particular impo'tance, fo' then you could employ others to attend to all the triflin' details fo' you, and content yo'self with takin' the profits. But it grieves me, Jack, to think of a young man of yo' ability and attainments throwin' away his God-given talents and becomin' the hirelin' of a Trust, slavin' fo' a pittance, without hope [and without ambition, and then bein' flung aside to starve when he is wo'n out and wo'thless."

"Who said anything about slaving without hope or ambition?" I demanded, feeling a mixture of pleasure and irritation in the Major's comments.

"Who said it, suh?" the Major returned impressively. "I said it, suh. I affirm it, I reiterate it, suh. It is part and pa'cel of our monst'ous system, suh, that is limitin' the oppo'tunities of our young men till there is no career open to

them except that of an underpaid servant of an overbearin' monopoly. And the scoundrels in control, not content with absorb'in' all the currency in circulation and makin' a gentleman's note of hand absolutely unnegoiable unless it is backed up with bonds — a piece of grim humour on their part, suh, fo' who would care to borrow if he owned bonds? — are stealthily and relentlessly inculcatin' ideals of pa'simony and ploddin' among our youth, breedin' a race of tin-ho'n spo'ts and pikers, suh, fo' whom one who had the pleasure of playin' with their fathers can feel nothin' but contempt. But the old days are gone, suh, when a gentleman left the so'did details of his estate to his overseer; when courtesy was a creed and hospitality a religion, and a social evenin' at cards the relaxation of gentlemen. No'thern capital and Yankee methods have made the older generation, to which I have the honah of belongin', suh, feel that they are blank Ishmaelites in their own country."

I felt mighty sorry for the Major, but I was something of an Ishmaelite myself, so I repressed my tears, and gently led the conversation back to the point with:

"Well, what *do* you advise, then?"

"That you shun offices like the plague; that you refuse to stultify yo' intellect by addin' two

and two; that you be man enough not to soil yo' hands countin' the dirty money that another is wringin' from barter in the necessities of life; in sho't, that you abjure all these triffin', trashy ways of keepin' body and soul together, and use the wits that the Lo'd has given you to live like an Anglo-Saxon and a gentleman. A fair idea is a livin'; a good one is a competence; and the Big Idea is a fo'tune. Fair ideas are plenty: I can get them any evenin' over a quiet glass; but together, suh, yo' wits and mine, we 'll find the Big Idea."

I 'm afraid that I was n't born to row up stream when there's a good current setting down. I adjourned to the Major's room with him and let him convince me there, though I 'd made up my mind down stairs to take a hand in his game. He explained that he wanted the companionship and help of a bright young man, and that he 'd classified me as belonging to the pippin family as soon as he 'd seen me. He was awfully nice about the money end of things, and made me feel that I was doing him a favour in consenting to have my evening clothes taken out of hock, my trunk out of storage, and in accepting the loan of twenty for carfare. These details settled, and the Major having wrung my hand and congratulated me on having been saved from myself, we went into

executive session to see if we could n't dig up the Big Idea without further delay. But when I peered into my mind, I was simply appalled by the glimpse I got of the emptiness there, and, while the Major drew out a hundred or more ideas from his, they were all blanks. Evidently, it was Generals Beau-regard's and Early's day off, the Major observed; so we gave it up for the afternoon and went to a "Continuous."

That evening we settled down to serious business in the Major's room. My host produced cob pipes and his bottle of Old Bourbon, explaining that it was not his intention to use it as a beverage, for he was unalterably opposed to drinking while business matters were under consideration, but that he would take a few snifters purely as a throat-emollient and brain-laxative. Having advanced and accepted the theory that the wearing of coats hampered the free play of one's fancy, we settled down in our shirt-sleeves, cosy and comfortable, to lay hold of a full-grown idea, with side-whiskers and a white waistcoat, that would be a kind and indulgent parent to us and save us from having to work.

Dear reader, have you ever tried to think up the Big Idea — not some *fool* scheme for saving the Nation, or improving the yield of sugar-beets, or making people subscribe to your tire-

some old paper — but have you ever reached up into the blue empyrean and grabbed at a star in its course, and tried to pull it down to earth by the tail? I used to think that the astronomers guessed or lied about the distance to the nearest star, but now I'm rather inclined to think that they've understated their case.

I'd been groping around on the edges of space till my brain was fairly stupefied by the vastness of the void, when the Major's voice called me back.

"Jack," he was saying reflectively, "has it ever occurred to you that there might be a fo'tune in a reversible rail?"

I admitted that it never had, and asked what sort of a rail and how you reversed it.

"A railroad rail, of cou'se," the Major returned, sitting up. "A rail that, when it has served its purpose on one side, can simply be turned over and made to enter into a new career of usefulness on the other. By Geo'ge, suh, I wonder that no one has ever thought of that befo'!"

"It certainly does sound pretty good," I returned judicially.

"Sounds pretty good, suh?" The Major cried, springing to his feet and gesticulating enthusiastically. "You bet it sounds pretty good. It sounds

like a revolution in modern railroadin', suh! It sounds like a plantation back home, suh, fo' me, and a mansion on Fifth Avenue fo' you! Think of the millions — no, I would not exaggerate if I said billions, Jack — of rails thrown away to rust and rot every year."

I, too, was on my feet now, dancing around with excitement, but, even as I reached to give the Major's hand a congratulatory shake, a chilling doubt struck me. "Has it occurred to you, Major," I ventured, "that if both the top and the bottom of the rail were rounded in the same way, we might not be able to make the blamed thing stand up?"

But the Major's cup of happiness was not to be dashed by doubts. "A detail, my deah boy," he exclaimed, waving it aside; "a trillin' detail, that any fo' dollar-a-day mechanic can fix fo' us. We've struck it, suh — struck it first crack out of the box," and then we both started talking at once, with now and then a question like: "Will the Steel Trust dig down in its sock to pay for this? I guess!" or an exclamation like: "Allowin' that we get royalties on only fifty million tons a year," ringing out above the rough-house.

Well, by and by we calmed down a little, and I was for going out for a walk, so long as we had the Idea safely caged, but the Major said no —

that while the cards were running right we ought to press our luck and hive up some more ideas. So we went at it again, both eager with the excitement of the chase, the Major baying along in the lead like an old hound.

We struck a good many false scents, but inside of half an hour I was on my feet with a shout and an idea for "Luminous Letters" — letters made of some luminous composition, "like — er — luminous paint, you know," I explained, that would admit of their being read both night and day. I drew a glowing and profitable picture of New York with all the signs, house numbers and billboards brilliant with our letters — in short, as the Major phrased it, "a perfect luminous hell, suh."

The excitement and profit-taking over this idea had barely subsided when I came to my feet again and explained my "Timed Inks" to the Major — "Inks of some ingenious chemical composition, you know, timed to fade out completely in thirty, sixty or ninety days, as one may wish. Think of the drivelling love letters one could write, the incriminating secrets one could put on paper, the four-months-after-date notes one could sign, the ——" but the Major, fairly weeping with joy, was pounding me on the back and crying:

"My boy, my boy; my deah, deah boy! What imagination! What genius! What a blank boon to humanity!"

When we returned to our knitting after this, we had a long barren spell, but finally the Major gave the short, sharp "Ahem!" which presaged an important announcement from him.

"Jack," he began with irritating deliberation, so that I should not be caught unprepared for and be shocked by the whale which he was about to produce: "have you ever seen one of these compressed — er — atmosphere equipments, with which houses and hotels are cleansed and renovated?"

"Yes, yes," I answered impatiently. "What is it?"

"An admirable invention, sub; but has it ever occurred to you that its promoters have overlooked a large, and, I think I may safely add, an exceedingly profitable field of usefulness?"

"No it never has; but I'll bet they have. What is it?"

"You are correct in yo' sa'mise, sub. It's ho'ses — ho'ses, Jack," reiterated the Major, permitting himself to warm up.

"How? Yes — of course," I ventured, willing and anxious to cheer, but, as yet, not quite sure what for.

“And the idea will introduce itself, suh,” the Major explained. “We will walk into any livery-stable in New Yo’k, hire a rig, drive around to the compressed air establishment, and run the — er — sucker — or whatever they call the appliance that draws out the dirt — over one-half of the ho’sse. Then we ’ll take him back to the stable, shinin’ on one side like a brown satin dress, and, by contrast, lookin’ on the other like an old do’-mat. Will the curiosity of the stable-keeper be excited, suh? Will he want the refinin’ touch of the — er — sucker applied to the do’-mat side? Will he leap at the chance to contract with us, at a fairly remunerative price, say five dollars a head, to polish up all the plugs in his stable? I reckon we may answer in the affirmative. I am tol’ably certain that, from this single idea, speakin’ conservatively, mind you, Jack, we shall make no less than one hundred thousand dollars.”

It certainly looked that way to me just then, and I told the Major that he had undoubtedly got hold of the hottest dog in the frankfurter can.

After that we tried it for a little while longer, but the casting up of the whale had apparently put the kibosh on the game for the time being. So, as it was now one in the morning, we separated in high hopes and spirits, the Major bidding me

good night with: "A grand, an inspirin', a lucrative evenin's work. Yo' future is assured, Jack." I was so excited over it all that it took me a long time to get to sleep, and, when I finally dropped off, it was to dream of driving up to Anita's door in a coach and four.

Somehow, it was different at the breakfast table next morning. Something had happened to the ideas that made us regard them and each other a little peevisbly. In fact, we acted like two men who had been out on a bat together, with each waiting to see how much the other remembered of the disgraceful doings of the night before. Finally, we edged up to our inventions, and I began to express vague doubts about the feasibility of this and the practicability of that. In the morning light, one of the ideas looked suspiciously like our old friend, Perpetual Motion, and the others sounded like planks from a Populist platform. The Major nodded sagely, and deprecated our committing our fortunes to any of the ideas until after we had subjected them to "the most searchin' examination and the most ruthless tests. Though I am convinced, sub," he concluded with furrowed brow, "that these ideas contain the germs of some exceedin'ly useful and valuable discoveries. But caution and conservatism must be our watchwords.

We will make a note of these inventions fo' future reference," which he did. Then, after breakfast, we went around to a livery-stable, where there was "the finest little trottin' mare outside of the old State," and smoothed away the lines of our high thinking with a little drive out into the country.

That was the beginning of a two-weeks' debauch of scheming. All day long we prowled through the streets of New York, hunting for some sign that would betray the hiding-place of the Big Idea; after dinner we retired to the Major's room, lit our pipes, and tried to smoke it out of our heads. Every night we went to bed in a haze of optimism, potentially millionaires; every morning we came down to breakfast in a fog of pessimism, practically paupers.

No doubts disturbed the Major, for he still had several hundred dollars left, but after this sort of thing had been going on for a fortnight, and we had accumulated wild ideas enough to endow a ward in a lunatic asylum, I decided that we must think up a producer, or that I must go to work, for I could n't continue to sponge on the Major. So as soon as we were settled down in his room for the evening, I opened the proceedings with:

"Major, we've got to quit smoking this kind of dope and switch off to something practical.

We're not getting anywhere, and never will this way."

The Major sat up, looking surprised and a little hurt at my businesslike tone. I was rather surprised at it myself.

"My deah boy," he began reprovingly, "you must restrain yo' impatience. Rashness and impetuosity," he continued, his voice gathering assurance as he went along, "are admirable things in their place, but they have no place in business, suh."

"But they have had in our proceedings," I persisted brutally. "Would n't any bunch of experts that was handed a list of our ideas declare that we had progressive paranoia, and recommend a life sentence for us on the strength of that pre-digested pie scheme?"

The shot told and the Major looked miserable again, for the invention had been the darling child of his brain, the pampered pet of our smoker the evening before. "Let us, purely fo' the sake of argument, Jack, admit that we have been playin' on a dead card," he replied. "What would you suggest? I am one of those who welcome criticism, suh, but it must be constructive, not destructive, criticism." Of course he did — so does every one, meaning by constructive criticism, praise.

"Exactly," I answered. "We've been pawing the air for an idea. Now let's get after one in a scientific manner, applying psychological principles to our problem, and if that won't fetch it, give up and go to work."

"By Geo'ge, suh!" the Major exclaimed, all enthusiasm again as soon as he saw that my proposal did not involve the suppression of his favourite game, but simply a new way of playing it. "Why did n't we think of that befo'? We've been wastin' time, Jack. Let us try yo' method without delay. If one cock won't fight, we must gaff another. Explain yo'self, fully, my deah boy, and count on my hearty coöperation."

"Well," I began, drawing for my ideas on my brief association with Jim during the days of the Direct Command, "what we want is an article that will sell for a small price, so it must be simple; that will pay us a whopping profit, so it must go more on the cleverness of the idea than its intrinsic value; that will advertise itself, for we have no money with which to buy fame for it. So we must think up some tasty, trashy tomfool novelty, that we can hitch on to a popular idea, or man, or movement, and send forth into the cold, but silly world to hustle for its parents. That's not the Big Idea, I know; it's the idiotic one, but the market for idiocy is unlimited, I've

been told, even though I haven't been able to place myself. Besides, we'll be working in a more congenial field. Now, to begin: What's the most popular thing in the country to-day?"

"Our honahed President," the Major replied unhesitatingly. "He fits yo' description to a T."

"I love our President with a T," I commented, "because his name is Teddy; because he has Teeth, and because he's a Terror."

"Exactly, suh," the Major returned simply. "He's not only the most popular man in the country, but a popular idea, and a popular movement as well. But I can hardly see that that takes us anywhere."

I could n't either, but to gain time and to create a diversion that would give me an opportunity to rescue my theory from such prompt exploding, I answered: "I'm not so sure about his popularity, Major. It seems to me that there are signs of its waning. All this letter-writing and calling men liars is making a good many people tired, don't you think?"

"I most certainly do not think — at least in the affirmative, suh," the Major returned hotly. "On the contrary, suh, the country is proud that its Chief Executive has convictions and the courage to express them in terms that no scoundrel can misunderstand and that no gentleman can wear."

"But Major," I interrupted, "how can any one effectively resent anything that the President says about him?"

"How, suh? How, suh?" The Major snorted belligerently, and jumped from his chair. Silently stepping off ten paces, he wheeled and suddenly discharged his answer, as though at the word to fire: "I have every reason to believe, suh, though I am not at liberty to disclose the sou'ces of my info'mation, that the President holds himself in readiness to give *the fullest personal satisfaction*" — and he paused to let the words soak in — "to anyone who may demand it."

I had n't been able to think of anything yet, so there was nothing to do but throw another at the Major: "Well, granting that," I put forth, "still, a lot of people are beginning to think that Teddy's a mere noise."

"I don't care, suh, and the people don't care, if President Roosevelt" — and the Major reproved me for my too familiar Teddy with a pause and a glance — "is nothin' but a noise; he's shoutin' fire, and frightenin' off the scoundrels who have been preparin' to commit arson with the — er — palladium of our liberties. I am only sorry, suh, that his enthusiasm fo' manly spo'ts does not extend to those games of chance which so many gentlemen of an older generation

found stimulatın' to their highest faculties. Poker and faro, suh, are, I regret to say, the only pursuits that have not felt his reformin' and purifyin' and revivifyin' influence."

As he finished, I saw my chance to retreat, without invalidating my theory; "Well, Major," I replied, "you may be right, but there's no use in our discussing it, for some one else thought of him first and sprang the Teddy bear. Probably got the idea just this way."

"By Geo'ge, suh! I reckon you are right," the Major returned. "But it does seem as if there ought to be mo' than one idea in so versatile a President. How much do those blank Teddy bears cost, Jack?"

"Oh, anywhere from one to ten dollars!"

"From one to ten dollars! Astoundin'! Why, suh, they're only fo' little plutocrats then! There should be good money in popularisin' the Teddy bear, Jack — makin' a fair article that would sell fo' two-bits, and so bringin' it within the reach of the masses."

"I'm afraid not," I answered. "The dollar ones are punk as it is. It seems impossible to give them that bully, idiotic expression for less than two or three bones."

"Or improvin' it — adaptin' it in some way to the children's elders, thereby openin' up new

fields of usefulness to it, and, as you so thoughtfully observed, enablin' us to take advantage of the advertisin' it has already enjoyed."

"How?"

"Teddy," the Major began musingly — "Teddy — Rough Riders — San Juan Hill — Booker T. — Brownsville — tennis — strenuous life — dear Maria — dig the canal — rubber — Taft — squeeze 'em — third term — square deal — trusts — mollycoddle — Harriman — liar — dec-lighted — dee-whoop! I've got it, Jack! I've got it, suh! Listen here! A little rubber Teddy bear, that you can carry in your pocket, and when you squeeze it, you inflate its tongue, thereby causin' it to stick out ——"

"And? ——"

"On that long, protrudin' tongue is painted: "*Dec-lighted!*"

"Yes, and ——"

"When anyone asks you to take a drink, or to have a cigar, or to do anythin' that calls fo' an affirmative, do you answer yes? No, suh! You take out yo' Teddy bear and squeeze it at him! And Jack, listen here! When anyone asks you if the President will accept a third term, you don't discuss the question with him or allow yo'self to be drawn into any undignified argument about why he should or why he should n't take

the nomination: *you simply squeeze yo' bear in his face.*"

"Why, Major," I began, beginning to get a little excited myself, "this looks like the real hot tabas ----"

"This *is* somethin' big, Jack -- the Big Idea, in fact," he interrupted. "I have felt fo' several days that we were tremblin' on the verge of an impo'rant discovery, but I never dreamed of anythin' as tremenjous and as far-reachin' in its consequences as this. Why, suh, this little article absolutely assures the reelection of our honahed President fo' a third term. It means the confoundin' of his enemies! It will put the hell-houn's of the System on the run! Think of the sale fo' it Convention week! It will sweep the country like wild-fire, and settle the whole thing. It means, suh, aside from the fo'tune that it will bring us, positions of honah and dignity under the Administration: A mission abroad fo' me -- I have always felt that I was peculiarly fitted fo' a diplomatic career - - somethin' just as good at home fo' you'. Teddy is loyal to his friends. He cannot ignore our services, suh."

"He probably will," I replied, "but what 's the odds so long as we can cash in on the idea? Then, if your fancy runs to swelling around in a plaited shirt and being a bum statesman, you

can go West and buy one of those marked-down Senatorships. But it's me for a quiet, restful vacation at the St. Regis."

I wouldn't let my imagination carry me so far as the Major's took him — and he not only gave free rein to his fancy, but had a complete runaway — for I had a sobering fear that, when we sat down to breakfast with this latest child of our brains, we should both be for leaving the horrid thing on the steps of the nearest foundling asylum. But even while I was dressing next morning, the idea still looked good to me, and down the hall I could hear the Major's bass rolling out:

"How I l-o-ove that pretty ya-a-l-ler ga-a-l-l-l,
Do-o-own Mo-o-bile!"

That was a sure sign that he was pleased with himself. And when we met at the breakfast table, there was none of the usual laboured conversation about the weather, and the higher life, and the shameful doings in the Senate, anything except our pitiful inventions of the preceding night; but the Major greeted me with a radiant face and wrung my hand with a rapture unimpaired by sleep and reflection.

"Then it's a whiz!" I exclaimed.

"My deah boy," the Major replied, "it is not only a whiz, but a hummah! You are in on the

ground flo' of King Solomon's Mines, Limited — to us two."

Things went with a rush that day. First we filed a caveat on the idea, and then the Major placed an order with a manufacturing firm that he knew of for as many of the dec-lighted bears as his now very limited capital would pay for. These details attended to, we returned to his room to plan out our campaign. In that the Major was thoroughly at home; in fact, I found that he already had the details pretty well worked out in his head.

"Jack," he began, "this thing will lend itself to original and takin' methods of introduction better than anythin' I have ever had the pleasure of presentin' to the public. Aside from the entertainin' and amusin' features of the little article, all of which we must present adequately, there is a splendid chance for a campaign of education among our voters in callin' their attention to its political impo'tance. I shall include in my speech a complete exposure of the System, suh, and of its crimes against the country, and make all our agents memorise it. Of cou'se we shall, owin' to our lack of capital, have to do the preliminary work of introduction ourselves."

The crisis which I had been dreading had come. I saw myself standing on a dry-goods box in a

crowded street, hoarsely inviting the passers-by to gaze on my shame and to buy my silly wares. In my cowardly heart, I felt that I could never do it. And yet I could n't refuse to bear my share of the heat and burden of the day.

"Could n't we, Major," I suggested weakly, "find a partner with capital who 'd let us go right into the thing on a big scale?"

"No, suh!" the Major returned decisively. "None of that in mine when I 've got a good thing. A partner with capital is American fo' hog, suh. He wants half the profits fo' his capital and the other half fo' himself. Yo' share is the glory of havin' the little article named after you and the bad debts. Not fo' Majah Geo'ge Magoffin Jackson, suh."

"I 'm only afraid," I admitted, hating myself for trying to crawl, "that our interests might suffer if I tried my hand at actual street work. You see, I 've never had any experience at that sort of thing, and I 'm naturally of a rather timid and retiring disposition; so perhaps ——"

"I 've thought of that," the Major interrupted. "Of cou'se you 've got to be broken in to speak in public some time, but this matter is too important to be trusted to anyone who is n't thoroughly experienced in — er — addressin' an audience. But we shall be able to make full use of yo' talents,

never you fear, Jack. Now my idea, and I think I may say without boastin' that it will excite mo' than the passin' interest of the thoughtless, is this: I first, and afterward every agent that represents us, will be accompanied by a man to pass the little article around among the crowd. Nothing new in that, suh, you say. No, but each of these men will be dressed up as a big Teddy bear, head and all, and somewhere under his -- er -- hide he will hold a large air ball, connected by a tube to a collapsible tongue of very thin rubber, such as the little bears in his basket have. Well, suh, every time I make a tellin' point in my speech, the bear assistin' me will squeeze the rubber ball, thereby inflatin' the tongue and makin' it stick out at the audience. Perhaps, suh, when the people see that tongue protrudin', with Deelight painted on it, they won't shout themselves hoarse and tumble over themselves to buy the little article?"

"Bully!" I applauded. "They'll fight for 'em."

"You bet it's bully, suh," the Major continued. "And, Jack, *you are to be the first bear.*"

Why, oh, why had n't I seen his drift sooner and knocked his fool scheme? I was in a panic at the thought of lending myself to this hideous masquerade. "Me!" I exclaimed. "I could n't

be a bear, really. I'm a wretched actor, and besides I'm — I'm superstitious about bears — afraid of them — I really believe I was marked by one."

The Major would n't listen to me. "Nonsense, Jack," he returned. "You'll make a perfect Teddy bear. The part fits you to a T, and after you get over the stage fright that is inseparable from a first appearance in public, you will do yo'self proud. Besides, we can't affo'd at this stage of the game to squander our resou'ces hirin' outside talent."

It was no use. I had been elected, and there was no resigning from the inevitable, if I wanted to share in the profits. Besides, I reflected, it was better than having to do the barking, for my face would be covered, and so there was no chance that anyone would recognise me. I yielded without further argument and, accompanied by the Major, went out to be measured for a Teddy-bear suit. For the next week, while the bears were being made, the Major was in the throes of composition, preparing his great speech on the iniquities of the System and the peculiar virtues of the Teddy bear. I divided my days between the Zoo in Central Park, where I studied the habits and deportment of bears, and a corner of the Major's room, where I prac-

tised jig-steps and growling, until I had attained a fair degree of proficiency in both.

"Splendid, Jack!" the Major would exclaim, glancing up from his work whenever I managed a peculiarly ferocious growl. "That last one was thrillin'; it had the ring of sincerity in it. It's those little realistic touches that open the great heart and pocket-book of our American public, suh." Or again, "Growl louder, suh! With blood on yo' jaws. I'm touchin' up yo' namesake, that old scoundrel, Con Spurlock!"

So long as our appearance on the street was still in the future, I felt brave enough about the part I was to play, but when the little articles, as the Major always called them, were delivered, and my Teddy-bear suit was sent home by the theatrical costumer, I found myself giving way again to dark forebodings. And when, finally, the day came, and I climbed into my Teddy-bear suit behind the prescription counter of an East Side drug-store, near which the Major had chosen our first stand, I felt like a diver dressed for the plunge into unknown depths, where goggle-eyed octopi and inquisitive sharks might be lined up waiting for a quick lunch.

Maybe we did n't draw a crowd? and quick? It was like a three-alarm fire. The people came running from every direction, dragging the children

with them; it almost seemed as if men popped up from trap-doors at our feet and materialised out of the fourth dimension.

The Major lost no time, but went right into action as if he 'd been tipped off to remember the Maine. Mounted on an empty box, silk hat tilted back, and holding me by a chain, he bel-lowed, stormed, bullied, laughed, joked, told stories, gave advice, and made me dance and play the promiscuous fool, until the street was half blocked. When he saw that the crowd was with him to a man, he explained the frivolous uses to which the little article could be put, and they caught on with a roar. "We've got 'em goin', son," he exclaimed to me in a delighted aside. "Now watch me stampede them," and he launched suddenly into an attack on the System that was a corker. He deprecated the House, he deplored the Senate, and he damned Wall Street. He excoriated Rogers, walloped Morgan, skinned Rockefeller, flayed Harriman, and in a tone that scared a ten-foot hole in the crowd around him, demanded answers to some extremely embarrassing questions. As the plutocrats did n't appear to have a spokesman present, he held up their heads to the scorn and execration of the populace. "But, my fellow-citizens," he concluded, "there is one who stands firm fo'

you against the hellish arts and heartless machinations of this destroyin' Moloch; one who wraps around him the precious and priceless palladium of our blood-bought liberties and dares the hell-houn's of the System to lay a finger on it; one whose — er — teeth are bared and whose voice is raised in protest" — aside to me: "Growl like hell, Jack" — "against these dastardly assaults on the — er — bulwarks of the people's rights; and this man, my fellow-citizens, is fitin'ly symbolised by the noble denizen of the American wilderness that stands beside me — playful and open-hearted with the friends of our glorious Republic" — "Dance, Jack" — "fierce and thirstin' fo' the gore of its enemies." — "Put up your dukes and growl, Jack."

"I stand here appealin' to yo' patriotism, not yo' pocket-books. I don't want yo' money, but yo' moral support. The enemies of our honahed President are demandin' that he adhere to some foolish words spoken in the heat and exaltation of gettin' what he wanted and forgettin' that he — er — might want it again. We must save him from these enemies and from himself — if he needs savin'. So I repudiate, openly and fearlessly, his declaration that he will not accept another nomination fo' the Presidency; I answer you that he must and shall run

again, and I offer to each and every gentleman present, fo' the nominal, the insignificant, the triflin' sum of a quarter, twenty-five cents, two-bits, this little article which I hold in my hand. It will enable you, one and severally, to answer decisively that momentous question: Will Teddy accept a third term?"

At this prearranged cue, I squeezed the rubber ball and the long tongue shot out at the crowd.

"Dee-lighted!" the mob roared as they saw it, and pushed forward to buy.

Just then, a coachman who was driving a team of spirited bays, that were drawing a smart little brougham, attempted to push through the crowd. A glimpse of a bear, even if it is only a Teddy bear, is n't the thing best calculated to soothe a nervous horse, and the moment the pair caught sight of me they reared and plunged wildly. As the coachman was losing his head, and as the people were tumbling back over one another, instead of trying to get a hold on the horses' bridles to steady them — an absurdly simple thing to do — I obeyed the impulse of the moment and started to struggle out of my bear suit, both to remove the cause of the panic and to lend a hand.

I had succeeded in freeing myself of the bear's head, when the horses took a sudden jump for-

ward under the coachman's whip, and I found myself looking through the open window of the brougham, straight into the startled eyes of Anita. For an awful moment we stared at each other, amazement in her face, horror in mine. Then, unconsciously, but convulsively, my hand gripped the rubber ball and that awful bear tongue shot out the cheerful greeting, "Dee-lighted!" just as a fresh cut from the driver's whip started the horses off.

Behind me a long rebel yell went up, and, turning, I found the Major struggling with a mob of hoodlums who had taken advantage of the diversion to raid our stock. It was a lovely rough-house, and the Southern troops fought nobly, but, as the Major explained in reviewing the disaster, "we were wo'n down like Lee in Virginia, suh, by the brute fo'ce of superior numbers." Like a saucer of milk by a stray cat, our stock was lapped up by the crowd, and then we were threatened by a new division of the mob, who howled for our blood because the horses had tried to trample their children to death. Explanations that we were not in collusion with the driver of the brougham proving futile, we fought our way, shoulder to shoulder, back to the friendly drug-store.

"Well, Major," I asked, once we were safely

inside, "are you hurt?" for the old fellow's face looked like the sun of Austerlitz.

"Not physically, suh," panted that indomitable warrior, squinting at me through the eye that was still in commission, "but in the best and highest feelin's of a gentleman. I doubt, suh, whether such po' trash is wo'th savin' from the System." Then, by way of after-thought: "And we 're paupers, son; our last dashed dollar was in that lot of the little article."

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL SPENDS A PLEASANT EVENING

WE^{LL}, we were certainly up against it for keeps, as A. Tennyson so beautifully phrases it in his unpublished works. The Major, after an excited evening, during which he traced the responsibility for our disaster step by step to the very doors of the System, and brought himself to the verge of apoplexy, settled into a lethargy of *solitaire*-playing, from which no artfully devised scheme of mine for coining millions, no matter how extravagant, could rouse him. So I turned to the Pagan philosophers for consolation, only to discover that helpful reflections lie cold and heavy on an empty stomach.

Philosophy is a pastime for the prosperous; a poor man can't afford it. No one but a John D. Rockefeller could hand out such phrases as, "Sweet Are the Uses of Adversity"; and he would n't really mean it unless he were getting a rebate and some other fellow the adversity. Poverty has a pretty back, but an ugly face. She's like those girls that people praise so highly

for their sterling qualities, and take such incredible pains to avoid.

There was no longer any doubt in my mind that the whole bunch of philosophers, from Aristotle to Zeno, were fakes, and only good for light reading on a full stomach. All pagans, B. C. and A. D., to the contrary, bar none from Epictetus to Andy Carnegie, there's only one real advantage in being broke — your friends don't come to you and say, "Cheer up, old man; think how much worse it would have been if you'd lost your health!" For, when you're as flat as we were, you have n't any friends, and your health is a positive detriment to you — it simply gives you an appetite that you can't afford to satisfy. I suppose I took my troubles pretty hard, but no one, excepting Job possibly, ever had a bigger bunch, and I was n't setting up in competition with Bible heroes.

I stood it round the house for two days, trying to rouse the Major, first with tempting schemes, then by offering to let him deal a little faro for me — the chips to be redeemed when we got the money — but it was no use. He stuck to solitaire, crooning Moody and Sankey hymns, punctuated with an occasional expletive when the right card failed to materialise. So finally I slipped off and left him to play himself into a

happier frame of mind, while I called on a number of indifferent and impertinent employers. I was game for anything from a bank presidency down, but the men I tackled with my proposition had no sporting blood. I could n't seem to interest anybody in anything I said, except, "Good-bye." It certainly looked as if I were nobody's darling.

Returning at the end of the second day from this futile chase of the anise-seed bag, I stuck my head in at the Major's door. The old fellow was still at it. Sitting there in the firelight, with his fine, venerable head bowed over the table, he was a perfect picture of your dear, sainted old grandpop — that is, if you cut out the cards and some of the language. He was singing softly as he played:

"Let the lo-wer lights be—blank that blankety blank ace—
bur-er-nin',

Cast a gleam-er-ac—dog my cats—cross the wave,
Some po' shipwrecked—stung again, blank it—drown-in'—"

Then he broke off suddenly, for he had caught sight of me, standing in the doorway and smiling through my discouragement.

"Hullo! Major," I called. "I see that good old Doctor Jekyll's still trying to convert the naughty, card-playing Mr. Hyde."

The Major jumped up at the first word and ran toward me. "My po' boy!" he cried, seizing

my hands. "I feared so. It came to me in a flash, after you sneaked out this mo'nin', and I have reproached myself bitterly all day fo' my selfish abso'ption in my triflin' disappointment. No, suh! Don't deny it, suh!" he hurried on, as he saw me reaching for a handy lie. "I know it; I see it in yo' face, suh. You've been lookin' fo' a job," and there was both sorrowful accusation and forgiveness for my fault in his voice.

"But, Major," I protested, grappling with the truth like a perfect little George Washington, now that I'd been caught with the hatchet on my person, "I have n't found a job, worse luck! and here it is the end of the week, with our board due, and a lot of perfectly bully shows in town, and grouse in season."

The Major's face wrinkled for a moment at this frank statement of our disadvantages, then mellowed with genial inspiration.

"I'm ashamed of you, Jack, fo' lettin' our triflin' reverses get on yo' nerves and lead you to take such a foolish cou'se. As fo' our boa'd, our landlady, though a trifle — er — unpolished, seems to have a good heart. We'll have her up at once and reassure her about her little matter. Then, as we both need some simple relaxation, we might effect a triflin' loan on some of our

superfluities and take in a good show, with just a bite of somethin' hot afterward."

The answer to my objections was so complete, and, I confess, so satisfactory to me, that I simply rang the bell and asked the slovenly maid to tell the landlady that the Major would like to see her.

She appeared in a moment, red-faced and sweaty from the kitchen, and bringing with her odours that were more than a hint of what we had had for luncheon and what we were to have for dinner.

The Major courteously waved her to a chair, but she ignored his gesture and stood with an anticipatory smirk on her face. She was accustomed to being sent for every Saturday night to receive our board. It's a bad habit to get people into the way of expecting anything, especially money, at a certain time. For, when they don't get it, they are disappointed, and I hate to cause pain.

"Mr. Spurlock and myself," the Major began in his largest and most expansive manner, quite as if he were distributing presents from a Christmas tree, "find ourselves temporarily short of funds, owing to the difficulty of makin' collections durin' the present annoyin' tightness of the money market. In consequence, we may

have to trespass on yo' good natchah fo' a week or two, but it will not, I trust, madam, cause you any inconvenience," and he wound up with a fine, old-school bow.

Unfortunately, this one happened to be a new-school landlady, and the perfidy of the men whom she had encountered in her forty odd years of life must have been something shocking. No one but a woman who 'd been jilted at twenty, deserted at thirty, and bilked by thousands of unscrupulous, but resourceful, boarders could have met the Major's affable explanation with so sudden and complete a refutation of it as came to her lips. While he was talking, I noticed a curious change in her appearance. The red in her face deepened into purple, but I took this for a natural fading out of the external fires, rather than a lighting up of the internal ones. But when he finished the flare-up was so complete that I felt she must have used some sort of mental kerosene to get such burning words at such short notice.

"Inconvenience me!" she echoed with bitter scorn. "Oh, no, certainly not! And do youse think I pay rent and buy food for youse with the kind of hot air that youse have been giving me? Shell out or get out — without your trunks!" she added significantly.

"But, my dear madam," the Major protested, momentarily appalled by this outburst.

"Don't youse give me any of your dear madams, but give me my money or I'll call a cop," the landlady interrupted with a scream. "Collections is slow, is they? And did one of your customers guess which shell the little pea was under? Or would n't the come-on take the package of green goods, Major George Guff and Mister Jack Spurious?"

"Come, come," I ventured, beginning to warm up a little myself; "that kind of talk won't do."

"No, you bet it won't do," was the energetic response. "Money's the only thing that talks with me, young feller. It's none of my business how youse get it, but youse have got to get it or git," which struck me as a pretty concise summing up of the New York Idea.

It was as if a drunken subaltern had struck the Emperor William in the face. The Major's blue eyes went black, and he stiffened up until dignity and danger fairly radiated from his person.

"Madam," he began — and his tone was the one that he would have used if he had been reaching for his revolver to shoot a gambler whom he had caught cheating — "yo' money will be ready fo' you in one hour, and these appahtments at yo' disposal five minutes later.

Until then, Mr. Spurlock and myself prefer to be alone," and he opened the door.

The landlady looked at him, extinguished her anger as quickly as she'd kindled it, and went out without a word. There was really nothing to say, but, if I'd done that to her, she'd have said something anyway.

"Well, Major," I ventured. "She's not exactly what you'd call confiding."

"She is not, suh, exactly what you'd call anythin' but names, and, as we could n't cuss her out befo' her face, we must n't behind her back. After all, she's only po' white trash, a she-devil that's hung over the fire in her hell-hole of a kitchen, cookin' fo' tin-ho'n spo'ts and sho't-card men so long that she can't understand that she's been entertainin' gentlemen unawares. Still, it's very annoyin' and very humiliatin'. I reckon I'll have to negotiate a triflin' loan on old reliable, Jack," and he tapped his watch-pocket and reached for his hat. Then, as he went out the door, he added: "And if that pa'simonious houn' of a Hebrew usurer offers me less than fifty I'll throw him to the hogs."

He came back with fifty.

I'm not given to introspection, because when I look within I rarely find anything, but I confess that while the Major was out I had a little serious

conversation with myself, and that the question of going to the Governor and crying "enough" was among the matters which came up for consideration. I knew he would take me back, but he would do it in about the same spirit as that in which he would absorb a weak railroad. I had been pretty severely spanked by "the world's rough hand," but as between that and my parent's, I preferred to remain on the knees of the gods, even if I must continue to occupy an undignified position there. That settled and off my mind, I turned to and began to pack up our belongings so that, by the time the Major returned with the money, everything was in the trunks except our evening clothes. We quickly changed into these, sent our baggage to a modest little hotel, where we could get a room over night for a couple of dollars, then paid the subdued, but still suspicious, landlady, and were out of the house within the stipulated hour. "And a good job, too, suh," commented the Major, as we went down the steps; "fo', in all my varied experience, I have never, suh, encountered a female who concentrated so much malice and venom in her bosom."

"Nor so many grease spots on it," I added. And so we passed out into the night and on to Delmonico's.

"I feel, Jack," began the Major, as we took

our seats in the café, "that after our tryin' experiences I need a little humourin' befo' I can regain my faith in mankind, and especially in that po'tion of it which is engaged in the boa'din'-house business. Now what would you say to a cup of clear green turtle; a bit of broiled pompano; some — er — grilled sweet potatoes around a grouse — not high, waiter, but middlin' well hung; some nice, crisp romaine, with a dash of chives in the dressin'; and a quart of Pol Roger '89 to wash it down? Does that meet with yo' approbation, suh, or would you like to add a few fixin's?"

I answered with a nod, but as soon as the waiter was out of hearing I whispered hoarsely:

"Will the bank stand the strain, Major, and how about breakfast?"

"My deah boy," the Major returned, a slight shade of annoyance marring his expression of perfect contentment, "you sometimes say things that lead me to fear you have the soul of a blank Yankee money-lender," and that was all the satisfaction I got just then.

Later, however, after we had finished our coffee and cigars, and were strolling up the Avenue, I found that the Major had fifteen dollars left, which was better than I had dared hope.

We had lingered so long in the café that the

people were already pouring out of the theatres, but as neither of us was in the humour for going to bed, we continued to stroll aimlessly along, watching the lights and the gay crowds, until we found ourselves approaching darker and quieter streets. At one of these the Major stopped suddenly. "By Geo'ge, Jack!" he exclaimed. "Handy's is just around the co'ner. Let's drop in and watch the play fo' half an hour. It's a square game, one of the few left in this country that a gentleman need not be ashamed to sit in."

"But will they let us in?" I questioned. I knew Handy's by reputation, as a place where a Pittsburg millionaire could, and usually did, drop anything from one to a hundred thousand, but where retail gamblers were severely frowned on. I doubted whether any two men with combined assets of fifteen dollars could pass its portals, except to make an ignominious exit. I elaborated this doubt to the Major.

"Nonsense," he replied reprovingly. "You must get over this vulgah No'thern notion that a man's simply the amount of currency that he happens to have upon his person. Come right along with me," and, almost before I knew it, the door of the house had swung open with a polite, "Good evening, Major," which I found,

on peering into the gloom, came from an obsequious attendant. He passed us in to a second man, who relieved us of our hats and coats.

I still felt a little abashed at venturing into this luxurious lair of the tiger, without being able to risk a thousand or two for the privilege, but the Major, a superb figure in his evening clothes, preceded me up the stairs with a serene confidence that he would be welcome, which characterised his entrance into any society. I began to appreciate as never before how much of my old self-confidence and self-esteem had been cut off with my allowance. Six months back I should have been cocksure of my welcome in any gambling-house and have ascribed it to some peculiarly engaging quality in myself.

At the door of the salon, we were met by Handy himself, a quiet, suave man, who greeted the Major cordially, asked him where he had been keeping himself for the past year, and shook hands with me as if he were my host at a little affair where my company, and not my money was wanted. Then he turned back to my companion.

"Playing to-night, Major?" he questioned, quite in the tone that one would use if one were asking a friend if his appetite were good.

"I really don't know, Handy," the Major

returned carelessly. "I have n't been in very good fo'm lately, but I should say that the blank luck was about due to change. I reckon I'll pike along through a deal or two and see how the cards run befo' I leave."

Handy smiled, and, to show his understanding of his fellow-professional's mettle, graciously offered to take off the limit for the Major if he should find himself in the humour to play. Apparently, my dear old friend had not been a piker in his day, and he was a mighty good bluffer yet, for one would have thought, from his manner of thanking Handy, that playing with the limit off was still a blessed and accustomed privilege. This exchange of greetings over, Handy turned to welcome a newcomer, while we passed on into the room.

There were, perhaps, a dozen men around the roulette wheel and the faro table. The games were proceeding quietly, except for the presence of one noisy, pudgy youth, who seemed to be losing steadily and in sufficiently large sums to warrant some excitement on the part of his absent, hardworking, millionaire papa, as well as himself. I turned from him just in time to see the Major, who had lounged over to the roulette wheel, drop our precious ten-spot on the board, quite as if he were lined with money and found

it heating. Of course, I started across the room on the jump to reason with him, but I was too late. Already the ball was spinning, and, as I reached the Major's side, it clicked into a pocket.

"Four and the red," the attendant sang out.

I turned away and walked over to the faro table, so that I need not see our ten-spot scooped in. I felt that I simply could n't bear it. Nor did I care to have the Major see the reproach for my lost breakfast that must have burned in my eyes, for, of course, the five would follow the ten-spot and we should walk home penniless. A touch on my arm disturbed these bitter reflections, and I found the Major dropping into a vacant chair at the faro table before me.

"I don't like these blank, frivolous, finicky French games," he observed calmly, as he laid a hundred-dollar chip on the high card and another on the jack to win; "they unsettle a man fo' serious and thoughtful play," and he reached across for his stakes, which the dealer had just doubled after announcing, "The deuce loses and the jack wins."

It seemed that in my haste to be spared the sight of the Major's finish at the roulette wheel, I had failed to notice that our ten-spot was on the four, and that when it came up the old scamp had taken down three hundred and sixty dollars

in chips, to which he had just added a couple of hundred.

I was in a perfect agony of haste to pry him loose while he had all that money in his hands, so I nudged him first, and, as this produced no effect, I kicked him viciously on the shin. He gave me a pleasant glance in return, and to show that he was in full sympathy with the desire to press our luck which my kick conveyed to him, he placed a five-hundred-dollar bet on the deuce and settled down comfortably in his chair to watch the deal.

If I have a weakness --- and I've been told that I have --- it's an inability to show my disapproval of people, and to disappoint them if they appeal to me for encouragement when they are preparing to do some perfectly idiotic thing. My friends have always taken it for granted that I was in hearty sympathy with every form of foolishness. Time after time, when some scheme of which I heartily disapproved has been sprung on me, and I've started in to express myself in words of burning reproof, one look at the beaming, fatuous face before me has dried up the fountains of criticism, and I have gushed forth the expected, "Perfectly bully, old man!"

It was just like that in this instance. I grabbed the Major's arm and started to hiss in his ear,

"Come away, you old ass"; but instead I whispered, "Corking work, Major! Crowd 'em! We need the money," and hung over his back in an agony of hope that something would happen to make him stop while he was winning. For win he did, steadily and largely, with only an occasional set-back. Time after time, he risked five hundred and a thousand on the turn of a card, winning and losing in a calm, imperturbable fashion that was in fine contrast to the excitement of Harry Manton, the Steel King, who was sitting across the board and acting like a fresh-water college sophomore just after the 'Varsity eleven has missed a try for goal. Apparently the Major, whom I had always found ready to go up into the air over "the hell-houn's of the System" and tariff reform, allowed himself the luxury of excitement only when there was nothing to get excited about, while he held himself in readiness to face the crises of life at ten paces.

I would stand over him as long as I could bear the excitement, and then turn to one of the other tables and make a pretence of watching the play there. But, in a moment, I would be back in my old place, afraid at first to look at the Major's pile of chips, lest I should find that it had been dissipated in riotous bets. Yet each time I would find that the Major had proved faithful to his

stewardship, and that his stack of yellows had a new bay-window or cupola on it.

When, at two o'clock in the morning, I returned from my twentieth tour of inspection and found that the Major was looking at the dealer over ten thousand dollars' worth of yellow chips, I decided that something immediate and decisive must be done to get him — and the money — away. So I leaned over, and, in a voice that I tried to make very firm, whispered:

"Come, Major; we've had enough of this, have n't we? It's two o'clock, and we should be getting along."

The Major's impassive expression changed in a moment to one of concern and self-reproach.

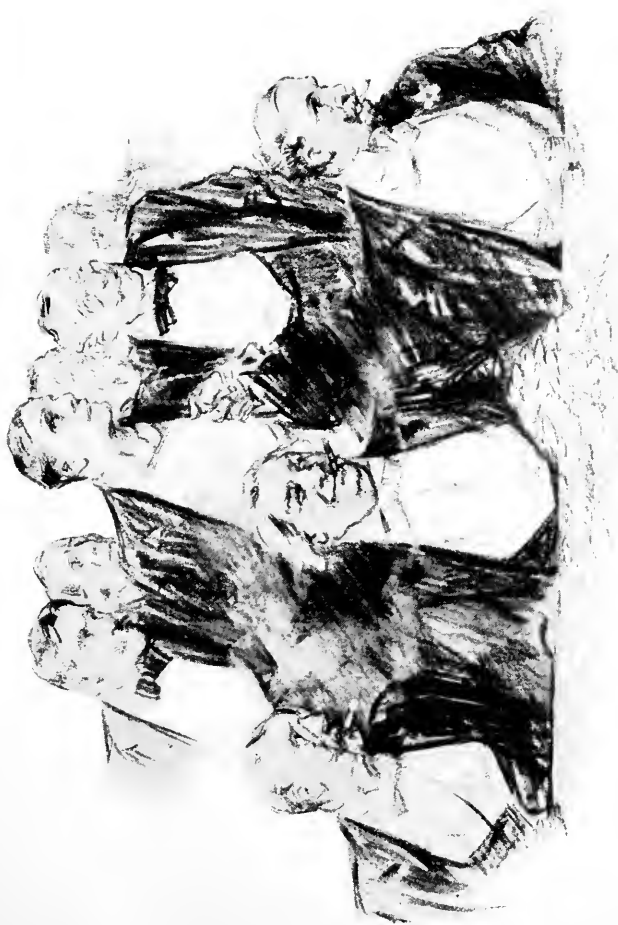
"My deah boy!" he exclaimed impulsively. "How selfish of me! Here I've been enjoyin' myself in my own way and never givin' a thought to how dull it must be fo' you. We 'll go directly."

Oh! how the lights danced, and the little birds sang in the bushes, and my heart leaped for joy! We were actually going to get away with the loot! Then ——

"Oh! Handy!" the Major called to the proprietor, who was standing near the board. "One turn, high card to win, splits barred?"

"How much?" Handy returned.

"About ten thousand, I reckon," the Major



I had a sickening certainty that the Major would furnish the corpse.

answered, pushing his yellows out on the board. "And this blank chicken feed," he added, shoving after them some reds and whites, which included our original stake of ten dollars.

The lights dimmed, the birds stopped singing, and my heart landed in my boots with a thud. It had leaped too quick. In my foolish haste to get the Major away, I had precipitated the catastrophe. I turned to Handy, with a half hope that he would refuse the bet, but he simply nodded a smiling assent to the dealer.

The players at the other tables left their seats and crowded around us, peering down over one another's shoulders, like a street crowd pushing for a look at an injured man. And I had a sickening certainty that in a moment the Major would furnish the corpse.

"Make your bets, gentlemen," the dealer called briskly.

I tried to close my eyes to shut out the horrid sight; but it was no use. I could n't look away from the little box which held the cards. What was the dealer waiting for? Why did n't he hurry? Could n't he see what an agony of suspense I was in? There ——

"The tray loses!" the dealer called, slipping out the first card.

The Major would win! Only the ace and the

dence could beat him now, and the chances were small that either was the next card in the box. A long breath of relief came from the men about the board and mingled with a pious exclamation from me.

"And the dence wins," continued the man at the box, finishing the deal.

The Major had lost.

"Geo'ge," he called to a pop-eyed waiter, who was lingering as near the table as he dared; "a glass of wine for Mr. Spurlock, and some Bou'bon, the '69, fo' me. Mind you, Bou'bon, you black rascal," he called after the admiring waiter, as he got up from the table and stretched himself. Then, turning to the proprietor: "I certainly made yo' dealer work hard to get my ten dollars, Handy," he chuckled.

I stood around in sullen silence until the drinks came, curtly refused mine, and then followed the still smiling Major down stairs. As the man held open the door for us, the Major fumbled in his pockets, and, with a pleasant, "Good night," tipped him our last five-dollar bill.

I broke down at this. "Oh, Major! Major!" I cried, as we turned into the street, "Do you know what you've done?"

The Major stared at me blankly.

"You tipped that fellow our last cent, and it's almost time for breakfast!"

"Why, so I did, Jack!" the Major replied, coming down out of the atmosphere of thousands in which he had been living all evening. "How thoughtless of me! But never mind. There's always some way of payin' fo' breakfast. We must n't let the triflin' little cares and worries of life spoil its pleasures for us."

I was too amazed and aggrieved to answer, for now that I was back in the sane and calming night air, it was not the loss of the ten thousand dollars — that had been too big and too intangible — which I minded. My grievance was the loss of that fifteen dollars in actual cash. But the Major, in happy ignorance of my anger, babbled on like a newly orphaned Vanderbilt:

"A very agreeable evenin', Jack. Quite like the old times, except that I missed the atmosphere, if I may call it that, of my day. The company to-night was perhaps a trifle — er — promiscuous, and it lacked in breedin' and repose, I thought. That steel fellow, now — a little vulgah, eh, Jack?"

I assented, and he rambled on, telling of the days when he ran the river, of brave companions and of high play, until he had quite lifted me out of my ill-humour.

"But that's all over, suh," he wound up with a sigh at the door of our little hotel, where, happily,

our trunks were a passport to a room; "this generation is too dashed self-righteous to play anythin' but pinocle fo' fun, or too blanked snobbish to play anythin' fo' stakes except bridge, and that only with people to whom they've been regularly introduced. Faro, with a few honourable exceptions, like our friend Handy, is in the hands of men who are a disgrace to their profession. They've brought gamblin' to such a pass that quite a sentiment has been fostered against it. Why, I could feel to-night, Jack, that back in yo' dashed Puritan conscience you did n't quite approve of my playin'."

I had the grace to blush, because my motives had not been unmixed, but I only answered: "I guess there's nothing in gambling nowadays, Major."

We undressed quickly and in silence, but after the lights were out and we were in bed the Major called across to me:

"Luck's a queer thing, Jack. Business men call it oppo'tunity; but whatever you call it, there's only one thing to know about it — press it while you've got it, and quit at the right time. I wish," he concluded reflectively, "there was some way of knowing when the right time to quit had come."

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL GOES TO THE RESCUE
OF BEAUTY IN DISTRESS

WHEN I first became conscious of the Voice, it seemed to come from an immense distance, from another world almost. It floated nearer, and I strained to catch a word or a sentence, but I could hear nothing except the tones, awful now in their dignity and majesty. Again it rolled nearer, and I began vaguely to understand that it was giving orders — orders of immense importance, preparing an army for a campaign, requisitioning vast stores of supplies, expending huge sums of money. Still nearer it came, and now it sounded strangely familiar.

“Geo’ge,” it was saying, “or is yo’ name Alphonse? Emile, then. Well, Emile, lend me yo’ ears, fo’ I am about to speak with you on a matter of some impo’tance. Mr. Spurlock and I are feelin’ a trifle peaked this mornin’, low in our minds and our finances, though high in faith and appetite. A good breakfast will raise our spirits, and then I shall raise the wind, so there will be five dollars to yo’ credit at luncheon

if you give all yo' attention to what I am goin' to say, and then impart a little of yo' enthusiasm to the chef."

"*Oui*; yes; of a certainty, *monsieur*," a minor Voice assented. It's curious how sympathetic waiters always are with men whom they suspect of having been on a bat the night before.

"Well, then," the major Voice continued, "we'll begin with some grapefruit, and fill up its crevices with a little old sherry — *amontillado*, mind you, not a blank mixture of burnt sugar and raw spirits; then some young chicken Maryland, with little, crisp co'n fritters and fried hominy; some potatoes *au gratin*; French rolls, and a large pot of coffee. With cream? *Oui*, cream of the cow; *comprenez*? None of yo' dashed blue hot milk. And — yes, I reckon we'll top off with some waffles and maple syrup, and the two-bit cigars of Habana. Dees that sound like a competent breakfast, Emile? *Ap-prouvez vous*?"

The minor Voice was apparently satisfied of its competence, for I heard a murmured assent and the door closed gently. Then the major Voice, humming, "Pull fo' the sho', sailor, pull fo' the sho'," jumped out of bed and began to frisk across the floor to the bathroom.

I sat up. "H. Major!" I called. "You're

certainly checked high this morning and going some. But I 'm a little curious to know who 's going to pay for that breakfast."

The Major turned and surveyed me reproachfully. "Why, Jack," he answered, "you 're gettin' to be a regular blank Pandora fo' curiosity. We 'll pay fo' the breakfast with what Pandora found at the bottom of the box, and give Emile the change."

"Hope for the hotel and kind words for the waiter," was my comment. I had n't forgotten that fifteen dollars in actual cash.

"Kind words are mo' than coronets," returned the Major cheerily.

"And cost less," I added. "But they don't cash in for a cent in New York. Conversation won't pay for that breakfast, and if you try it on there 'll simply be another horrid scene."

"Of cou'se, of cou'se," the Major assented soothingly. "I was only jokin', my deah boy. You must n't let yo'self give way to gloomy fo'bodin's so easily. We're not at the end of our resou'ces yet, suh, not by any means, as you 'll appreciate on a moment's reflection when you've cleared the cobwebs from yo' head. Now hop into yo' bath and get ready to eat a good breakfast, fo' we must conserve our strength, as we 're goin' to be mighty busy to-day. And

Jack," he added meaningly, "put on yo' favourite business suit." It was an ominous hint which, I felt, portended no good to the remainder of my wardrobe.

After we were dressed and the Major had had his morning nip—it made one thirsty just to see him take a drink—we settled down to our grapefruit and to conversation.

"Some men," the Major began oracularly, "allow that they're broke when they've got a house and a regular salary. Have n't the dashed resou'cefulness to mo'tgage the house or to overdraw the salary, even. Others allow that they're broke when they've got a wardrobe overflowin' with superfluous clothes and various little trinkets and gewgaws. But when I allow that I'm broke," and a note of superior virtue swelled in his slightly raised voice, "I've got nothin', suh, but the suit I'm standin' in, and no watch concealed about my person, either! That, suh, is what I call honest poverty."

I nodded and glanced sadly at the chair over which my evening clothes were festooned, for, from the drift of the Major's conversation, my earlier impression was confirmed, and I gathered that I was now engaged in eating the white silk waistcoat, and that the coat and trousers were already on the fire below.

"Some men," the old fellow continued, "exhaust the patience of their friends by borrowin' from them befo' they negotiate a loan on their personal effects. But a friend in need must n't be in need too dashed often. I exhaust the patience of strangers, suh, befo' I draw on that of friends."

"I'm with you there," I chimed in.

"I knew it, Jack," was the hearty answer. "I picked you fo' a thoroughbred at the start, and you've shown blue-grass breedin' in every heat that you've trotted."

It was the Major's best compliment, and I wished that it had been deserved, but he believed it, which was the main thing just then. I thanked him and inquired what the programme was.

"Lah Grippah!" he replied. "You remember — my simple remedy fo' simpletons. I saw it comin' when the Teddy Bear failed, but I hoped that somethin' might turn up to stave it off. But nothin' has, though that was a mighty near thing last night, Jack — a rustlin' of angels' wings, so to speak. Where we are goin', it would be bad fo'm to dress ostentatiously. By intrustin' our superfluous apparel to a member of the conservative race, we shall not only be layin' it up where moth cannot corrupt, but we shall provide ourselves with funds to liquidate our little bill here and to make a start on the road."

"For where?" I questioned, but my mind was made up. Much as I liked the Major, the time to break with him had come. I could not and I would not start out as a medicine fakir.

"The East Sho'," the Major answered.

"Of Maryland?"

"Exactly, suh. A peninsula of paradise, where many of the best traditions of the old days are still maintained."

"Colds prevalent there? Much sickness?"

"It's the healthiest place I know, Jack," was the answer. "Never heard of a sick man there; never heard of anyone dyin', except a No'therner who went insane with joy eatin' terrapin, and broke his neck tryin' to pull his head down into his chest — thought he was a dashed turtle. No, suh! Sick people send fo' doctors and have prescriptions filled. You give me a healthy country, where doctors can't make a livin', and I'll do business every time."

"But is this Lah Grippah any good?" I was craftily leading up to the split.

"It's been good to me, Jack," the Major answered simply.

"No; you know what I mean," I persisted. "Does it really help people?"

"It does n't hurt them."

"That's begging the question, Major," I

returned a little sharply. "What's in it, and is it a really good patent medicine?"

The Major stood up and swelled up before he discharged his reply at me.

"Patent medicine, suh? Patent medicine? Who said anything about patent medicines?" he exploded. "They're the curse of the country. No, suh! When I encounter a patient who is sick, I call a doctor; when I get one who wants a drink, I prescribe the nearest barroom. My remedy is harmless and wholesome. It's compounded fo' well people who think they're sick. Lah Grippah and Natchah work hand in hand. Lah Grippah cures their foolishness and Natchah eliminates the Lah Grippah from their systems. There's not a drop of real medicine in it. It's just a bad smell and a bitter taste. There's altogether too much takin' of medicines that are compounded of powerful drugs in this country! Besides, they're expensive," and at this climax the Major's chest collapsed, and he sat down out of breath.

The moment had come. I must refuse to be a party to drugging and deceiving the innocent inhabitants of the East Shore. I cleared my throat to tell the old rascal what I thought of him and his methods, but he was already speaking again.

"And do you know, Jack," he ran on, "that I'm rather lookin' fo'ward to the trip this time. Of late years I'd worked by myself until I met you, and, some way, I never knew just what a lonely old fellow I'd become. But our little friendship has been a great comfo't to me, Jack, a great comfo't," and looking up, I caught the old boy beaming at me with eyes full of affection.

I don't go in much for expressions of sentiment between men, but I'd have given anything in the world if I could have surprised that look just once in my father's eyes. The Major might be an old rascal, and he probably was, but he was a sincere old rascal, and a lovable one. No doubt it was moral cowardice, but if he'd proposed a little porch-climbing expedition to me just then, I'd have gone out and bought a pair of sneakers. As it was, I reached over and gripped his hand with:

"You've been corking to me, Major, ever since we met, and it's mighty good of you to let me in on this." And having scuttled my conscience in this fashion, I proceeded to run up the black flag by proposing that we carry a few side lines with Lah Grippah. "We ought," I suggested, "to appeal to as many different kinds of damfoolishness as possible."

"The very thing, Jack!" the Major exclaimed

enthusiastically. "A good tonic, fo' instance, somethin' to promote the growth and invigorate the roots of the hair, impartin' at the same time a pleasin' perfume to the person. A pomade's the thing, suh, somethin' slick and shiny and smelly — that's what the simple, sturdy youth of our country want. And oh! Jack! just listen here! We'll call it Teddy Bear Grease, and then that suit we had made fo' you won't be wasted. Why, suh! you'll only have to stand up in those Teddy bear clothes and they'll fight to buy; you saw enough last time to know that, Jack."

I certainly had, and furthermore, ever since that episode I had been unable to eat anything particularly rich before going to bed, without having a horrid nightmare, in which, as a Teddy bear, I was being pursued by our esteemed, but too agile, President, who, armed with a glittering knife, was asserting his intention of ripping me open to see whether I was stuffed with sawdust or cotton batting. For the Major to ask me to be the Teddy bear again was to subject our friendship to the supreme test, yet I made only what I knew would prove an ineffectual protest; for despite the apparent spontaneity of his suggestion, there was a guilty something in his eye which convinced me that the idea of my playing the part on this trip was no sudden inspiration.

"But, Major," I urged; "don't you think that we should have better success with the public if we used more dignified methods? It's not as if we were appealing to people with some amusing toy."

"Yo' point is well taken, Jack, and it shows a high ethical standard fo' which I honah you. I have never, suh, been in sympathy with the banjo-playin', sleight-of-hand methods of so many travellin' doctors. They tend to lower the tone of the healin' art and to bring our whole profession into disrepute with the mo' thoughtful. But a little legitimate advertisin', now, that's a different matter. I can see nothin' offensive to good taste in presentin' the trade-mark of our pomade to the public in a manner at once so convincin' and attractive. At the same time, by havin' a livin', breathin' embodiment of our trade-mark to do the talkin', we warn people in the most fo'cible way possible against infringements and cheap imitations. Am I right, suh?"

He was n't, but he was going to have his way in the end, which, for all practical purposes, is just as good as being right; so I came in. Then, breakfast being finished and the check signed with a prodigious flourish by the Major, we packed our frock coats and our linen in two large suit cases. That done, the Major called a four-

wheeler, and, as he explained to the solicitous clerk, drove away to put our trunks and their contents in "storage."

Left alone, I picked up the papers to see what they had to say about the Governor. It was a mighty busy day in the murder and divorce courts when he was n't mentioned unpleasantly at least once. That morning one of the papers roasted him amusingly, in a half-column editorial, for withholding the announcement of the increase in Illinois and Pacific's dividend until the afternoon of the directors' meeting, not because it disapproved of his methods, but because it belonged to a different school of high finance. Another, under the heading, "Spurlock Methods — Number 21," meaning that this was the twenty first editorial on that subject, soaked him for two solid columns. Of course that hurt the paper more than the Governor, for no one lives who will read twenty-one editorials, each two columns long, about anyone in the world except himself. Still it, too, was amusing in its way, for the fellow who wrote it was so cocksure that men and morals could be measured with his foot rule.

That reflection landed me in the obituary column, and, as I scanned it perfunctorily, my eye lit on two or three lines which brought me

up standing. They simply announced the death of Hamilton Grey; but Hamilton Grey was Anita's father.

I sat there a long time, staring at a spot on the wall and pretending that the hurt of losing Anita was over, and that what I was feeling now was brotherly affection and sympathy and all that kind of rot. I was still at it when the Major, in a pleasant glow from his tussle with his old friend the pawnbroker, burst into the room.

"Why, dash it all, Jack!" he exclaimed. "What's the matter? You look as if you were runnin' a blank mo'gue. Buck up, my deah boy! I made the old scoundrel come down proper," and he tapped his breast pocket joyously.

"See here, Major," I began without any preliminaries, "I need five dollars to fix up a personal matter. I know it's too bad to ask for it just now when we're so short, but I've simply got to have it."

It was characteristic of the Major that he asked no prying questions; for it was a cardinal principle of his creed that a man would tell what he wanted known about his affairs, and that the rest was nobody's business. It was equally characteristic of him that he handed me a ten-dollar bill, instead of a five, and inquired anxiously:

"Are you sure that's enough, Jack? You

must n't let that dashed, Yankee, cheeseparin', pa'simonious streak in you get the upper hand."

I took the ten dollars and spent it for violets for Anita. Then I walked back to the café, where Emile was receiving an order from the Major which evidently inspired profound respect, and announced:

"That 's attended to, Major, and I 'm ready to start."

"You would n't say that, Jack, if you knew what I 'd ordered fo' luncheon," the Major answered. "We 're goin' to have a little fo'taste of paradise in the shape of some crab-meat Dewey — a dish, suh, that I should rather have carry my name down to posterity than the battle of Manila Bay, and in sayin' that, I do not underrate the impo'tance of that magnificent achievement."

"I 've never tasted crab-meat Dewey," I admitted indifferently.

The Major smiled, but he gave me a rather keen look, I thought. "Then, suh, you are in fo' a tantalisin' fifteen minutes, fo' I 'm goin' to fix it befo' yo' very eyes. Here we are now," he added, as Emile placed a lighted chafing-dish on the table.

It was a fine sight to see the Major, skilfully blending crab-meat, fresh mushrooms, and oyster crabs in a delicious Newburgh sauce; stirring in

chopped truffles, and, from time to time, a few drops of sherry; sniffing the fragrant steam, now anxiously, now blissfully, as he fancied some lack or detected some new delight. I forgot my own troubles in watching his blessed labours, and, before the fifteen minutes was up, I had progressed from indifference to an absorption in crab-meat Dewey which made all other human concerns seem unimportant. Then — a final dash of sherry, a last critical sniff, a sigh of satisfaction, a "Quick Emile!" and the light was snuffed out. The masterpiece was done.

There was n't a word spoken for five minutes, but the Major would beam across at me, and I would beam back at the Major. It was only with the second helping that we became communicative, and then, naturally, conversation drifted to our coming trip. The Major prophesied big things for it, arguing that with the Teddy Bear Grease to supplement his old standby, Lah Grippah, we should "sweep through the South like a devourin' plague of locusts, and leave it bare of half dollars."

At that I ventured an observation. "I suppose you 're right, Major, because you know the game, but how reasonable human beings can be conned into buying medicine on a street corner passes my understanding."

“They ain’t reasonable human bein’s, suh,” the Major retorted. “There are mighty few reasonable human bein’s in the world — not one to a thousand suckers. Men go around braggin’ about their reason liftin’ them above the lower animals, and then they don’t use it. There ’s mo’ Natchah-fakin’ in all this pretendin’ to be smarter than the lowly kine and the intelligent coon-dog than our honoured President has dreamed of in his wildest moments. Most people get their ideas second-hand, and the fuller they are of holes, suh, the prouder they are of them. They walk down street with their shirt-tail stickin’ out, and strut as if it was a bunch of ostrich plumes. Tell them anythin’ loud enough, and often enough, and they ’ll believe it. Why, suh? Because they have n’t been taught to think, but only to hear. They have n’t been taught to doubt and then to believe, but to believe first. Blind faith is made a virtue, and the blinder yo’ faith, the mo’ virtuous you are. That ’s why the market fo’ goldbricks is always firm and advancin’, no matter how wheat is actin’. That ’s why so many of our countrymen will buy stock in any skin company that promises to perfo’ m financial miracles, and not ask a solitary embarrassin’ question until after they get the repo’t of the coroner’s jury that ’s

sat on the remains. The fellow who said that a sucker was bo'n every minute did n't state the case correctly, suh; fo' suckers are n't bo'n, they 're made — made, suh, by asinine methods of education which fo'ce a man to spend most of his time between twenty and thirty forgettin' what he learned between ten and twenty, if he 's goin' to have any sense between thirty and fo'ty. I 'd be a millionaire now, Jack, only I did n't begin forgettin' soon enough. Do I make myself clear? Do you follow me, suh?"

"I certainly do, Major, but it looks as if I might not be able to keep up," I laughed. "I not only have n't learned anything useful, but I have n't, like you, reached the point of forgetting anything useless."

"You will, though, Jack," the Major returned. "You have already. You 've been caught young, and you're forgettin' a heap and learnin' a heap. I reckon a trip or two with me won't hurt you, and then, sooner or later, you're bound to turn up the big idea."

Something in the Major's manner gave me courage to voice the insistent doubt that had been worrying me ever since I had agreed to go with him to the East Shore. "Since we are on the subject, Major," I asked, "tell me how is our game — this Lah Grippah business — any

better or different from any other skin game, except that the amount of money we take from each customer is small? I'd know from what you've just said, even if I had n't known it before, that you would n't do anything which you did n't believe was square. I don't like to think that I would, and yet, when I hunt for right angles, our business seems to be, if not exactly crooked, at least a little out of drawing."

"You are mistaken, Jack," the Major replied earnestly. "We're simply humourin' people who have made a practice of poisonin' their systems with the most malignant drugs in materia medica every time they go ker-chew or have to wipe their noses a little oftener than usual, into takin' a harmless substitute and givin' Natchah a chance to do her healin' and beneficent work. The fifty cents a bottle that we charge is really a fee fo' this — er — almost philanthropic service. Our ma'gin of profit is large, I admit, but that is the — er — approved practice in all modern business, and distasteful as it may be to us personally, suh, we must adjust ourselves to the spirit of the times or be content to clerk fo' the System at a pitiful and soul-destroyin' wage. But we have the satisfaction of knowin' that in our business the means justify the profits, while with the hell-houn's of the System, suh, it's the profits that justify the blank means."

I gave it up, and tried to believe that the Major's arguments had convinced me, for I had to go along or starve, and even with its lining of crab-meat Dewey, or perhaps because of it, my stomach refused to subscribe to any programme that included starvation. So, our luncheon being finished, we paid Emile, and fared forth to seek the hospitable East Shore.

We stopped off at Baltimore, as it was the nearest large city to our destination, to order bottles and labels. When we found that it would be three or four days before the printer could let us have the latter, the Major suggested that we push right on to our first town and let the supplies follow us, as he had heard of a cosey little hotel where our living would be cheaper.

The hotel was all that the Major had promised. It was kept by one of those she-has-seen-better-days women, in a bully old Colonial mansion. The Major had insisted on our wearing frock coats when we left Baltimore, saying that we must now begin to dress up to our profession, and I was horrified on glancing over his shoulder, as he registered, to see that he had inscribed on the virgin page:

OLD DOCTOR JACKSON

YOUNG DOCTOR SPURLOCK

Sole proprietors of the Sterling, Time-Tried Remedy,
Lah Grippah, and of Teddy Bear Grease, the Tonic
that Grows, Glosses and Glorifies the Hair.

“That, Jack,” he said to me in an aside, “is the first gun. It’s free advertisin’ and good advertisin’. Every yap in town will have a squint at that register befo’ night, and be tellin’ his friends about us.”

We had a Southern dinner, cooked by an old mammy who must have fetched her weight in gold during the old slave days and was still worth it. First there was a chicken gumbo soup, and then cold boiled Virginia ham, and hot fried chicken, with corn pudding, baked sweet potatoes and beaten biscuits. We seemed to be the only guests, and the Major, seated on the right of our innkeeper, was soon in high favour, for he praised everything in the good old Southern fashion, a succession of “Amazin’s”! and “Wonderfuls”! bursting from his lips with each fresh proof of the cook’s competence. And, someway, in this old white-wainscoted room, with its mellow mahogany furniture and its atmosphere of a past generation, his exaggerated gallantry and his high-flown compliments did not seem out of place. A faint colour came into the faded cheeks of our hostess — perhaps a reflection of that in mine, for I blushed like a boy whenever she addressed me as Doctor Spurlock — and from deprecation of the Major’s compliments she began gradually to progress to neighbourhood gossip.

"What a perfect con man the Major would make!" I thought, as I listened to her talk of the village grow more and more personal under his skilful questioning.

"And do you know, doctor," she ran on, "that a real English nobleman, Lo'd Frothingham, is stopping with us right here in this hotel?"

The Major raised his eyebrows slightly. "And what, madam, might his lo'dship be doin' in these parts?" he inquired.

"It's such a romantic story, doctor," she gushed. "He came over with the idea of buying a lot of land fo' a shooting preserve somewhere about here, and, quite by chance, he met Miss Roby and fell dead in love with her. That was only three weeks ago, and the wedding's set for next Tuesday."

"Quick work fo' an Englishman," was the Major's comment. "And the lady's parents — I presume they are agreeable?"

"Oh, she has n't any, only two cousins, but they're disposed to be disagreeable. Want her to wait until the papers Lo'd Frothingham has sent fo', and his family jewels and the coronet get here. But Miss Roby's dead set — she's over fo'ty and her own mistress — and she says that she's going to prove her faith in her lover to all the world."

"Then, madam, her confidence in him is n't shared by er — all the world?"

"No, indeed, doctor. Some folks reckon he is n't any lo'd at all, and that he 's just after Miss Roby fo' her money, because he ain't a day over thirty and she 's a good many days over fo'ty, though I will say that she don't look her years."

"Quite a disparity, madam; but true love is not only blind, but too gallant to ask a lady's age," and the Major gazed admiringly at our hostess. "And Miss Roby is, you say, a lady of — er — prope'ty?"

"She owns one of the finest plantations on the East Sho', and she has money in the bank. But I've seen enough to be sure that it 's a real love match. Lo'd Frothingham is out there to dinner now, but when he gets back, I'll introduce him to you, and then you can tell me what you think."

The Major promised, and, as we strolled out into the wide central hall which served as an office, he added to me:

"It looks as if we might find our visit here dashed amusin', Jack."

Along toward six o'clock we were sitting with our chairs tipped back against one of the columns of the portico, pretending to read our papers, but really listening to the languid gossip of the simple village fathers and their

simpler sons, a dozen of whom were loafing near us, when we became conscious of a new focus of their curiosity. And following their frank stares to their object, I saw a figure approaching that I knew must be Lord Frothingham.

It needed but one glance at his common, underbred face, handsome though it was in a cheap way, to tell me that his lordship was an impostor. And his first words of greeting to the men on the porch, spoken with a variety-stage English accent, made certainty a cinch.

As I listened to this fellow I was seized with a wicked inspiration, and when I confided it to the Major, the old boy's eyes twinkled. "Go ahead, Jack," he chuckled. "It'll be dashed amusin' to watch the blackguard squi'm."

I needed no urging. Slowly I lounged over to Lord Frothingham and slapped him heartily on the back.

"Hello Frothy, old boy!" I exclaimed jovially. "What the deuce you doing here?"

Frothy old boy went white. "Beg pardon," he stammered, "but you have the advantage of me, really."

"Oh, come old chap," I protested. "You must remember me. Met you at the Duke's last year. I'm Spurlock — Young Doctor Spurlock. Called in to help his grace through that

nasty spell of influenza. Dev'lish near thing for the old boy, was n't it?"

"Aw, yes, I do remember," his lordship answered uneasily, and he grasped my extended hand with visible reluctance, though he was afraid, in the presence of the gaping men beside us, to ask any questions.

"Oh, I thought you would," I gurgled pleasantly. "And here's another old friend of ours," I added, as the Major detached himself from a pillar and came toward us, with hands outstretched and joyful recognition beaming like a benediction from his face. "My chief, Old Doctor Jackson, you remember, the celebrated influenza specialist and discoverer of the sovereign remedy, Lah Grippah."

"This is indeed a pleasure, yo' lo'dship," exclaimed the Major. "I had not thought to meet you so far from yo' ancestral halls."

"Aw, yes, delighted," his lordship returned miserably. "But if you gentlemen will excuse me I'll run up and get ready for supper; been on the go all day, you know," and he hurried away to see, I guessed, if he could figure out just what our little game was, and what his course of action should be.

Instead of staying to talk with the villagers, who, with questions fairly bursting from their

lips, were already edging up to us, we followed his lordship. For the Major had a fine appreciation of advertising values, and piqued, but never satisfied, curiosity. Once inside, I turned to him and said: "Well, Major, we're going to spoil one scoundrel and his little game. The only question is, how and when to do it?"

"Better play him along fo' a day or two, Jack," the Major replied thoughtfully. "I reckon he's goin' to stimulate the medicine business right smart fo' us. Now why don't that dashed printer hurry with those blank labels?"

His lordship appeared at the supper-table, not, I fancy, because he wanted any supper, but because he was afraid to stay away. Miss Lynn, the innkeeper, excited and exclamatory over the Major's news that Frothy was an old friend of ours, deluged him with questions, to which he returned short and evasive answers. In fact, he showed such total lack of imagination that the Major, who had been listening with the keenest enjoyment, felt constrained both to liven up the conversation and to teach him how to treat his old friends. For Frothy's manner toward us was characterised by what he fondly believed to be the hauteur and coldness of a Vere de Vere, though in his proper person and on his familiar Rialto he would probably have

called it "giving us the frosty mitt." So when Miss Lynn inquired breathlessly, "And who was at this house-pa'ty, yo' lo'dship?" before the unhappy Frothy could reolv, the Major cut in with:

"Speakin' of the house-pa'ty, yo' Lo'd Percy, how goes that little affair of yo's with the Lady Victoria Maud? A charmin' girl, suh, a woman whose trust and affection any man might well be proud of winnin'."

It was a frightful situation for Frothy. On either side sat a smiling, but merciless, iconoclast from Missouri; in the foreground a pop-eyed, large-eared, loose-mouthed lady; in the middle distance, a trusting, but not-to-be-trifled-with, middle-aged maiden; and in the background, two determined cousins with shotguns, and a full chorus of village youth with rails, tar-buckets, feather pillows, and other necessary props. No wonder Frothy forgot his lines, and stammered in the purest Broadway American:

"Wh — wh — at Lady Maud? Wh — at d' you mean?"

"You should n't have mentioned that, Doctor," I spoke up reprovngly. "You know the Duke said it was a dead secret, and that it was n't to be announced till just before the marriage, as his lordship did n't like long engagements."

"I beg yo' pa'don, my deah fellow!" the Major exclaimed, turning a distressed face toward Frothy. "It was very thoughtless of me — but here among yo' friends — a — er — sacred confidence — I am sure that no harm has been done. Unless — yes — I see from yo' manner that I have blundered — fo'give me, I beg, fo' openin' an old wound."

Nothing could have been more tender and sympathetic than the look that the Major gave Frothy; and nothing more ferocious in its powerless rage than the one that Frothy returned. But he was quick to take the avenue of escape which opened up for him.

"That affair was broken off long ago," he explained. "I was never really in love with her; it was simply a flirtation, nothing more." Then he blocked further comment by excusing himself, and managed to retire in fairly good order. But he had acknowledged us and the Lady Victoria Maud, and we had scored the first points in our game.

"Very distressin', very distressin'!" the Major exclaimed as soon as Frothy was out of hearing. "He has taken the affair to heart, I fear. But there — I 'd clean fo'gotten — yo' charmin' friend, madam, has, no doubt, healed the old wounds of the little god, while inflictin' fresh ones. Of

cou'se, you must n't mention this affair. It could do no good, and it might ——"

We all assented, but there was an absent, glazed look in Miss Lynn's eyes which told us that she was already conning over a list of her friends and trying to decide which one was most worthy to hear the great news first. So she, too, soon excused herself, exclaiming: "How romantic! I knew all along that he was a real lo'd; and a love affair, too, with the Lady Victoria Maud! What did you say her last name was?"

"Her last name, madam? Her last name?" the Major repeated slowly, and I could see that this unexpected thirst for detail had caught him unprepared. "Her full name is the Lady Victoria Maud — er — er — Alexandria Beatrice Bromley, beloved and only daughter of Lo'd Fastnet."

I started toward the portico for an after-supper smoke, but the Major's touch restrained me. "Go up to my room, Jack," he whispered. "His lo'dship should join us there in about ten minutes."

Frothy rapped on the door in five, and, answering the Major's "Come in," strode defiantly into the room — a little too defiantly for a man who was n't afraid. The Major stood up to receive him, but he did not offer him a chair.

"I want to know what you fellows are up to,"

Frothy blurted out, as soon as he had closed the door behind him.

"Up to, yo' lo'dship?" the Major repeated. "Explain yo'self, I beg." There was the growl of distant thunder in his tone.

"Oh, you know what I mean," was the impatient answer. There was no pretence of an English accent now.

"No, suh, I do not know what you mean," the Major replied with much impressiveness. "But I do know, suh, that yo' manner is most offensive to me." He paused a moment and then continued, as if with sudden understanding: "Unless, suh, you feel that anything in my remarks about the Lady Victoria Maud reflects on yo' honah, and you wish to demand satisfaction. In that event, I would point out to yo' lo'dship that custom prescribes that yo' friend, rather than yo' lo'dship in person, should wait on me."

Frothy gave ground visibly before the Major's fierce eye.

"No offence, Doctor, no offence," he began with an attempt at familiarity. "But why do you pretend to recognise me — that's what I want to know?"

"Pretend? Pretend, suh?" echoed the Major, working himself up into a rage. "How dare you, suh? Do you mean to doubt my word,

to insinuate that I was not in attendance on his Grace, or — am I to understand that you are not Lo'd Percy Frothingham, of Chudleigh Towers, Sussex?"

Frothy gave a sickly grin as he grasped the significance of the question. "Of course I'm Lord Frothingham," he admitted weakly.

"And — take a good, careful look, yo' lo'dship, to refresh yo' treacherous memory — you remember Doctor Spurlock and myself, and that — er — unfo'tunate little affair with the Lady Victoria Maud?"

"Certainly, Doctor," the now thoroughly tamed Frothy replied.

"Then, yo' lo'dship, all misunderstandin's havin' been cleared away, we need detain you no longer."

His lordship hesitated, thought better of it, voiced a weak "Good night," and got as far as the door on his way out, when a call from the Major halted him:

"And oh! Lo'd Percy — I'd almost fo'gotten — you remember that last night at the Duke's, when we played bridge?"

"Ye — e — s," reluctantly.

"And you remember that I O U for a thousand guineas you gave me?"

"Ye — e — s," with an awful effort of memory and in a choking voice.

“Well, yo’ lo’dship, I ’m a little sho’t, and I could use that money.”

Stony silence while his lordship swallowed something. I was a little surprised myself at the Major’s remembering the I O U, for I knew that he would n’t touch a cent of Frothy’s dirty money, even if the fellow could raise any, and I could n’t see just how this particular play fitted into our game. But I was n’t to remain long in doubt. Rage and relief were now apparent in Frothy’s face — rage at our rapacity; relief that he was n’t to be exposed, but only to be held up for a share.

“Why, the fact is, Doctor,” was the answer, “I’m a little short myself just now, but I’m expecting money by any mail, and then I’ll cash up.” He was a little bolder now that he thought we were fellow-rascals, but he was still feeling his way cautiously.

“Very good, suh,” the Major returned; “but, of cou’sse, you will not think of marryin’ Miss Roby until after you receive yo’ remittances and credentials from England. While I know that a man of yo’ lo’dship’s pride and position would not ordinarily think of doin’ such a thing, sometimes, under the impatience engendered by an overmasterin’ passion fo’ a charmin’ woman, the most honourable man will do things which he

would not contemplate in his less — er — impetuous moments. But, on reflection, suh, you will see that no matter how much yo' affianced may desire to prove her affection by marryin' you in spite of doubters, yo' pride will not permit you to proceed in this matter until you are in a position to prove that yo' traducers are liars."

"Oh, come now, Doctor," Frothy protested with a leer of understanding. "You know that until after the wed ——"

"Not another word, suh!" the Major roared. "Yo' lo'dship is fo'gettin' himself. You fo'get the honah, the traditions of yo' noble house. There will be no weddin', suh, not a single, solitary weddin' bell fo' you, suh, until after you get that money from home and yo' credentials. And as yo' affianced is an o'phan, I shall do myself the honah, suh, to act in a father's place, should any houn' behave toward her in a manner which seems to call fo' the chastisin' hand of a male relative. Good night, suh! No, suh! Not another word," and the Major backed Frothy out of the room and shut the door in his face.

"What's your idea in stringing Lord Percy along?" I asked, as soon as we were alone again. "Why not expose the scoundrel and be done with it?"

“Because, Jack, I want to fo’ce the blackguard to light out of his own acco’d. If we expose him we put that po’ woman he’s been foolin’ in a fix where she can never hold up her head again, but there’s a certain mou’nful distinction in being jilted by a lo’d who’s had an affair with the Lady Victoria Maud. Besides,” the Major added thoughtfully, “if we prove that there’s no Lo’d Frothingham, what becomes of the advertisin’ we’re goin’ to get from havin’ seen his Grace through that little spell of influenza?”

I saw the point and refrained from further questioning.

Next morning Frothy was not at the table, and we learned that he had breakfasted early and gone somewhere to kill time, until the boat left for the little settlement, five miles down the bay, where Miss Roby lived. There was no hotel there, only a dozen houses, and, it seemed, he had been in the habit of taking a late morning boat, dining and spending the afternoon with Miss Roby, and coming home for supper on the up-boat. Miss Lynn was also missing from the breakfast table, but the Major didn’t ask after her. “I know where she is, Jack,” he volunteered. “I saw her drive off while I was shavin’ — I reckon she could n’t hold in fo’ the boat. She’s gone to tell Miss Roby about that little affair

with the Lady Victoria Maud. She told the neighbours last night."

It was one of those soft, lazy days in early fall which are made to be wasted, so we loafed on the veranda, smoking and talking in a desultory fashion, until a carriage drove up and Miss Lynn jumped out of it.

"Oh, Doctor!" she called as soon as she caught sight of the Major. "Miss Roby wants to know if you won't see her directly. She's caught a dreadful cold, and her wedding only two days off, and I told her you could cure her."

"I most assuredly can, madam, and I will," the Major responded with alacrity. "While I'm not — er — regularly practisin' on this trip, it bein' in the natchah of a little outin' — though I shall incidentally take occasion to make yo' sufferers from influenza acquainted with the virtues of Lah Grippah — I cannot refuse to answer the call of — er — beauty in distress."

"Thank you, Doctor, and it'll be a mighty big favour to Miss Roby, fo' she's worryin' herself sick over bein' married with a red nose. And she wants you to take Lo'd Frothingham over in the carriage with you."

"It's too bad, madam," the Major returned regretfully, "but Lo'd Percy has started off on a long tramp, and left word that he would go

directly to the boat-landin’,” and, with a bow to Miss Lynn and a wink to me, the old rascal skipped into the carriage and was driven off down the white shell road.

The Major did not return until after two o’clock, and with him in the carriage, looking rather sulky, was Frothy.

“I brought his lo’dship back with me,” the Major explained, as he jumped nimbly to the ground, “because, as Miss Roby’s physician I feel it my duty to see that she is kept absolutely quiet until the present distressin’ symptoms are relieved.”

I could see that the Major was bursting with information, and, as I was bursting with curiosity, we were not long in getting together in his room.

“Well, what ’s she like?” I demanded, as soon as we were alone.

“An angel, suh,” was the emphatic response. “An angel, suh, with a dashed fine plantation and twenty niggers. She ’s a gentlewoman, suh, of blood and breedin’, and true to the noblest traditions of the South. I never ate a better dinner in my life. Why, suh, that suckin’ pig, with baked sweet potatoes, made me feel that I was takin’ a holy pilgrimage back to the — er — hallowed scenes of my boyhood. I have conceived a profound, an endurin’ admiration fo’

the lady, and it will be a pleasure, as well as a duty, now that I have seen her, to save her from this blank scoundrel. No wonder his wooin' has been ardent! That plantation would be a dashed comfo'table place to live, Jack. Just the spot fo' a gentleman to spend his declinin' years in dignified retirement. *Otium cum dignitate*. Mighty well-trained niggers, too, suh — quite like the old kind. Had to kick one out of my way, and, instead of lookin' annoyed, as one of these new niggers would, he just picked himself up and said, 'Thank you, suh.'"

It took me a moment to sort out the Major's praises for Miss Roby from his pæans over the sucking pig and the Negroes. But this done and the facts about her digested, I asked:

"But, if she's all this, how in the name of common sense has a cheap skate like Frothy managed to impose on her?"

"Simply because she's all that and mo', suh," the Major returned. "She's a dashed fine, simple woman, who's lived in a simple, honest way all her life and read so many novels by the Duchess that she really believes that lo'ds go around matin' like robins, and fo' first choice pick a dairymaid or a general-housework girl to preside over their ancestral halls. This dashed bounder of a barnsto'mer, with his pinky cheeks

and his curly moustache and his sickenin' way of lookin' at her with his head cocked to one side, like a coon dog squintin' up a tree at a possum, has her plum hypnotised, suh."

"And how did it happen that he came back with you?"

"Why, suh, do you know that that scoundrel had the effrontery to say that he was goin' to stay and spend the afternoon with her? I came mighty near exposin' him on the spot, but, instead, I felt Miss Roby's pulse and discovered some new and alarmin' symptoms. So I told her to go to bed directly, and not to think of stirrin' until mornin'."

"When you will call again to see how she's getting on."

"Exactly, suh."

"And in the meantime, how about finishing up with Frothy?"

"We'll let that go over till to-morrow, Jack. Then I'll have decided how the thing can be done quietly and with the greatest consideration fo' the lady's feelin's."

Right after breakfast next morning, the Major drove over to Miss Roby's plantation, and, despite his stern caution that his patient would hardly be well enough to see visitors that day, Frothy followed on the boat. Again they returned

together, for, as I learned later, Miss Roby's alarming symptoms had developed afresh with the appearance of Frothy, and, despite her protests that she felt perfectly well, the Major had bundled her off to bed for the rest of the day, assuring her that this deceptive feeling of health was one of the gravest symptoms of her malady.

Frothy jumped out of the carriage and started to make off down the street — since our first talk he had carefully kept away from us as much as possible — but the Major, who was right on his heels, laid a restraining hand on his shoulder.

"One moment, yo' lo'dship," he said pleasantly. "If you have no objection, Doctor Spurlock and I will accompany you on yo' little constitutional."

Frothy looked far from cordial, but we went anyway, and, furthermore, we directed his footsteps to a secluded spot by the water. There the Major opened up on the unhappy barnstormer.

"Yo' lo'dship," he began gravely, "I was greatly surprised to learn this mo'nin' that, despite the failure of yo' credentials to arrive, you are permittin' the arrangements fo' yo' weddin' to-morrow to proceed. Permit me to info'm you, suh, that on reflection and actin' *in loco parentis*, so to speak, I have decided that yo' marriage to Miss Roby will not take place to-morrow or on any other day, as I do not believe

that such an alliance is calculated to make fo' the lady's happiness. Though fitted to ado'n any society, I fear that, unaccustomed as she is to smokin' cigarettes and soppin' up highballs, she might not find yo's congenial. Let me suggest that one of the same noble lineage as yo'self, the Lady Victoria Maud, fo' instance, would be a mo' suitable match fo' you. But as far as Miss Roby goes, you will consider yo'self on a dead card. Even if you can, I cannot consent to such a *mésalliance*, suh."

"Oh! I'll take a chance on the *mésalliance* part," was the jaunty answer. But there was an ugly look on Frothy's face, for he saw that the crisis in his affairs had come.

"I did not refer to you, but to the lady, when I used the word *mésalliance*," the Major returned icily. "We will consider that matter settled, suh, and now consult about how yo' lo'dship can most considerately break this engagement befo' catchin' the afternoon boat fo' Baltimo'."

"Forget it," Frothy returned angrily. "I see through your game all right. You think you'll have a try for the old girl yourself, do you, and get it all, instead of blackmailing me out of a part of it? I'm willing to talk business, but first let's drop all this nonsense about ——"

"Yes, I'll drop it, you damned houn'," the

Major returned in a tone that brought Frothy up white and scared. "One mo' mention of that lady's name, except in terms of the highest respect; one mo' such dastardly insinuation about my motives, and I'll shoot you down like the low Bowery cur that you are. You will now precede us to the hotel, there write a letter that I shall dictate, and leave the East Sho', never to return."

The trip back to the hotel was made in silence and good order. There, in the Major's room, we dictated a letter of explanation and parting that reeked with flowery adjectives descriptive of Miss Roby, and abject substantives descriptive of Frothy. Whenever the Major dug up a phrase which he thought particularly choice he would exclaim: "It's a burnin' shame, Jack, to let this dashed scoundrel use such beautiful gems of thought! But fo' Miss Roby's sake, we must do the thing up proper." And do it up proper we did, from that opening sentence which the Major dictated: "Would God that I had died befo' I came into yo' pure, yo' beautiful, yo' perfect life — put unworthy wretch that I am, after died," he amended — down to that final: "And so, though I am to'n by conflictin' emotions, tossed between love and duty, I am doin' what you would tell me to do, if I had the courage to

face you — um — m — stick cowardly and pusillanimous skunk; no, craven that I am, befo' what — in obeyin' the stern mandate of my father to return and marry the Lady Victoria Maud, even though I love her not."

That signed, sealed and dropped in the post-office by the Major himself, we told Frothy that we would see that his trunk was sent to a Baltimore address, the Major remarking that he did n't want to call any attention to Frothy's departure by letting him take his baggage with him, and we escorted his lordship down to the boat. The beggar took it all calmly enough, now he was sure that we meant business, and, as he went up the gangplank, called back to the indignant Major: "Ta, ta, old bear's grease. Lay you ten to one she won't have you."

It was only with the greatest difficulty that I restrained the Major from following Frothy on board and giving him a caning. But I managed to hold him back with a, "What's the use?" until after the boat had cast off, when I added teasingly: "And you can afford to be generous now that you have a clear field with the lady."

"Don't, Jack, I implo' you," the Major returned, with genuine distress in his face. "I confess with shame that the blackguard's strictures were not entirely undeserved; in sho't, that I

was beginnin' to feel a mo' than fatherly regard fo' the lady. But that — er — dream is over, suh. I have already banished all thoughts of that plantation from my mind. Fo' I should be no better than that fellow if I allowed myself to take advantage of a situation which I have created. We must get down to work, Jack," and the Major regarded me with a mixture of Christian resignation and business hope in his face.

On our return to the hotel, we found the package from the printer, so there was really nothing to stop our getting right down to work if we wanted to, but, some way, we did n't want to. I heartily agreed with the Major's tentative, "After a quiet evenin' and a good night's sleep, suh, we shall rise like lions refreshed fo' our duties," and we dropped the disagreeable subject.

Nevertheless, we were n't in a particularly leonine mood next morning; we were waiting for something to drop. But at breakfast Miss Lynn was still planning to go to the wedding, and, while she remarked on his lordship's absence, she thought nothing of it, assuming that he had gone over to Miss Roby's village the day before in order to be handy for the ceremony. At eleven o'clock no messenger had ridden over from Miss Roby to announce his lordship's defection, and we saw people beginning to start

for the wedding. Miss Lynn came down starched and rustling in her best clothes, and asked us if we should n't like to drive over with her.

"I don't think we 'd better, Jack," the Major said in an aside; "they might want to take it out on us, as his lo'dship's next friends." But I knew from his tone he was going to accept, and in the next breath he did.

Half-way there, I had an inspiration. Like bright things, inspirations come to me about twenty-four hours after it's all over.

"How did his lordship get over to Miss Roby's last evening?" I asked Miss Lynn. "Walk?"

"No, he would n't have done that, fo' it's a right smart piece. He 'd have driven over or taken the evening boat."

"The evenin' boat!" the Major echoed in a startled voice. "Is there an evenin' boat down?"

"Of cou'se, Doctor."

"How long after the up-boat leaves?"

"About an hour; a little mo' perhaps."

"And does it carry any mail, might I inquire?"

"Yes; it takes the down-mail. Did you have some letters to go on it?"

"Yes, an impo'tant one, madam," the Major replied, "and I trust that it has not miscarried." For the first time we exchanged glances, the Major swapping a growing suspicion for a

miserable certainly which he found in my eyes. So that was why Frothy had taken his departure so calmly!

"Geo'ge," the Major called to the driver, "push that ho'se!" Then he added in an aside to me: "What simpletons we were not to know about that boat! Of cou'se the scoundrel got off at the next dock, caught the down-boat which was carryin' his letter and got it unopened from Miss Roby. And he counts on our not findin' out till the last minute and then keepin' quiet in the hope of gettin' somethin' out of him. Of cou'se he'll have the ceremony just as much befo' twelve as they'll let him. Say it's his dashed impatience to call her his own, the blank skunk!"

There was no pushing the horse. The most resolute cracking of the whip over his flanks failed to move him from his jog. We could only fret silently, and, being without watches, we were deprived of the poor consolation of noting the flight of time. But at last we pulled up before the little crossroads church and hustled Miss Lynn out of the carriage. Rigs were already hitched to all the racks and nearby trees; darky drivers were peering in at the open windows, but no white folks were in sight. That looked bad. At the door, the monotonous singsong

of the clergyman's voice greeted our ears. The ceremony was on.

"Into this holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. If any man can show just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace."

With the last word the Major strode forward. "I fo'bid the banns!" he shouted dramatically. The ceremony was off.

There was dead silence for a moment — bride fainting — Frothy in a funk — everybody pop-eyed — then great disorder, as they say in the House of Commons. The Major raised his hand, and curiosity got the better of excitement. The noise stopped, and the people wiggled their ears so as not to miss a whisper of the scandal.

"That fellow there," the Major exclaimed, pointing at Frothy, "is an impostor, a cheap actor. I don't know what his name is, but it is n't Frothingham; he does n't come from England, but from the Bowery. This ceremony must not proceed. In the name of the — er — sovereign state of Maryland, I fo'bid the banns." It was simply great to hear him roll it out.

Then Frothy, braced by his extremity, played his big card.

"That 's a lie," he shouted. "That old faker 's

been scheming to marry Miss Roby and get her money ever since he met her. He knows perfectly well that I'm Lord Forthingham, and before he decided to try on this dodge, *he recognised me in the presence of witnesses who are here now.*"

"That's so," a dozen voices from the pews chorused, and then the rough-house began afresh. Someway, I seem to be a natural focus of trouble, for in a moment the Major and I found ourselves the centre of a yelling, questioning and threatening crowd. But in spite of all our arguments and our pleading for a postponement until a thorough investigation could be made, the drift was against us. The crowd was there for wedding and a big dinner afterward, and the counsels of reason went down before the promptings of appetite. We were finally hustled outside, where our treatment was none too gentle. "And just as soon as we get the young folks tied, we'll attend to yo' case," the leader said significantly, as he administered a lingering farewell cuff to me. He really seemed to hate to part with me. "You've got ten minutes start. See how far you can get in it."

"That means business on the East Sho', Jack," the ruffled Major panted, as we started off on a walk which was so fast that an unsympathetic observer might have called it a run. "This is

one of the most damnable outrages that has ever been perpetrated in Maryland, but there 'll be a worse one soon if we don't hurry — and a coat of tar and feathers ain't a soothin' poultice fo' injured feelin's."

We made for the bay as our best chance, and, by great good luck, found a Negro fisherman near the dock, bailing out his sloop. After a hasty dicker with him, we stood off and up shore in the sloop, to pick up the Baltimore boat. It did n't seem wise, in the present temper of the populace, to return to the hotel for our clothes.

Once out in the bay, the Major stood up, and, striking a Napoleon-on-board-the-Bellerophon attitude, cursed the receding East Sho', its oysters, its canvasbacks, its terrapin and its inhabitants. Then, in a spasm of regret, he added more gently:

"Yet I certainly could have been happy on that plantation, Jack. She was the finest woman I've ever met."

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL HELPS COLLECT A
LITTLE BILL

WHEN the Major and I walked down the gangplank at Baltimore, a cold fog was blowing in from the bay, and our faces contributed nothing to the cheerfulness of the landscape. For the trip across had been given over to serious conversation, which I loathe, because it never results in anything except adding a dash of crape to a situation that is already lavender. Of course, it's safe to fear the worst, but, somehow, it always strikes me as being just a little indelicate — like telephoning the undertaker an hour or so before the corpse is ready.

To do the Major's sunny disposition justice, only some great shock could have driven him to so distasteful a course, but a hasty, followed by a slow, searching of his pockets furnished the shock. The first clean-up was two dollars and ten cents. A further probing of his clothes, following all their curves, dips, spurs and angles, failed to add a penny to it.

"And I could have swo'n, suh," the Major

exclaimed, when the last flicker of hope fled with the turning out of his pistol pocket, "that I had ten — yes, twenty dollars, besides this beggarly pittance. How, suh, are we goin' to get to New York on this?"

"Put me one in plain arithmetic, Major," I replied. "I'm not up on differential calculus. It looks as if we might have to do as the Baltimoreans do, and tarry a while in this beautiful little city."

"But how, suh, can we earn our bread in this God-fo'saken hole?" the Major persisted with growing excitement.

"We might follow the advice of a certain celebrated queen," I suggested, "and eat cake — Lady Baltimore." Then the serious conversation began.

Coming off the boat in our silk hats and frock-coats, we must have looked like a couple of bum statesmen from the sagebrush. At the first place which seemed good to him, the Major automatically turned in for his afternoon appetiser, it being an oft-proclaimed theory of his that "it is a blank outrage, suh, to introduce food suddenly into an unprepared and unsuspectin' stomach. It should always, suh, be given a gracious and stimulin' warnin' that it is expected to perfo'm its functions." But he checked himself at the



THE PUNCH

"An exceedin'ly nutritious and gentlemanly repast."

very bar, as he remembered our impoverished state, and backed out, saying yearningly and doubtfully, "I reckon I 'm better off without it, eh, Jack?"

I was cruel enough to confirm this rather hazy impression, and I improved the occasion to tell him how much better I felt since I had learned to regard water as a beverage. But the Major listened abstractedly. He never cared to talk temperance until after he had had his third drink. For him to nod approvingly over, "Wine is a mocker," he had to be feeling just a little bit lit up.

We dined off a dozen raw oysters apiece in a waterfront restaurant. This lowered the privy purse by fifty cents, but so raised the Major's spirits that, as we started off to hunt for some place to sleep, he exclaimed:

"That made an exceedin'ly nutritious and — er — gentlemanly repast, suh! Don't have to pick yo' blank teeth after eatin' oysters. Now we 'll get to bed with the chickens and rise in the mo'nin' with the lark, to hunt fo' Opportunity. And when we do find her, suh, as I am absolutely convinced that we shall, I allow we 'll pull her dashed fo'lock out by the roots befo' we let her get away."

We found one of those hotels where everyone

pays in advance, because no one has any baggage, or because, if anyone has, the proprietor is afraid he'll leave it. We got a room for fifty cents apiece, and, though the beds were damp and dirty, I was disposed on reflection to agree that they were "not so damp and dirty as the blank sidewalk, suh." So we turned in, and, as we were both dog-tired after what the Major called "the multitudinous activities of the day," we were soon sleeping like millionaires in the tenthousand-dollar bed at the St. Regis.

Alas, no magniloquent voice, ordering a sumptuous breakfast, disturbed my slumbers next morning. I came to in the gray dawn with a stomachache — but it was the ache of emptiness, not of repletion — and put on my ridiculous frock-coat, while the Major trumpeted defiance through his Roman nose at the phantoms of his dreams. Then, as timidly and as bunglingly as a bride on her honeymoon, I abstracted a dime from the sixty cents capital in my trusting roommate's pocket, and tiptoed out and down stairs. Pinned to the Major's coat I left this hastily scribbled note:

DEAR MAJOR: Meet me here between six and seven to-night. I've taken breakfast money and gone out to set a hen. Our eggs are all in one basket now, but unless they are rotten I'll hatch them into money. I'll try to, anyway, but this is a suspicious world.

JACK.

I had an anchor to leeward about which the Major knew nothing; in fact, when I had thrown it overboard I had taken precious good care that he should n't know anything about it, for it was my Teddy-bear suit. On our way through Baltimore the week before, I had thoughtfully wrapped it up in a separate parcel and checked it in the baggage-room of the hotel at which we were stopping. I had not mentioned this to the Major, because he had been counting on my appearance as the Teddy-bear to sell incredible quantities of the pomade, and I knew that if I had given him a hint of my unwillingness, he would have reasoned with me until he had proved that being the bear was a duty I owed to suffering humanity. But there's nothing checks painful argument like removing the cause of the controversy. And now my cowardice would look like admirable prudence, and I was not the man to claim another motive. So may circumstance make virtues of our vices.

Once in possession of the bundle, I invested my dime in coffee and rolls, and, feeling moderately refreshed, inquired the way to the largest department store in the city. There I made for the toy department, and, in a brisk, businesslike tone, claimed the attention of its manager. And now I made a surprising discovery. For the

first time in my sporadic hunting of a job I was able to interest some one in what I was talking about — I had something definite to say. For the first time, I was able to make some one consider me seriously — I had something definite to offer. I was looking for an opening to be the Teddy-bear.

I began with one of those simple, manly statements which a fellow makes when he's asking the girl's father, and trying to tell him modestly that his Helen has caught a fine fellow. The manager started to edge away, muttering something about "not needing any more help just then." But I remembered that Jim had told me once that first, and at any cost, you must get your customer's undivided attention, and then proceed to interest him. So as this fellow seemed to be of a coarse fibre, on which refined methods were wasted, I shook out my Teddy-bear suit and jumped into it before he could say "Jack Robinson," or, in fact, anything except, "Well, I'll be hanged!"

I had succeeded in attracting his attention, so I proceeded to interest him by inflating the long rubber tongue with "Dee-lighted" on it, and shooting it out in his face. It scared him back ten feet, and then his first impulse was to call for help. His second, which he followed,

was to invite me into his private office, out of the laughing crowd that was gathering around us.

Once inside, I dropped into a chair, threw back the bear's head, and started right in to follow up my advantage:

"Corker, ain't it? My own invention — covered by patents — warranted to cause wholesome merriment among the little ones, and to make their mammas shell out — ready to go to work right now. Put me out there on that platform, with a good salesman beside me, and you can wire your jobbers to double their orders. You'll need the toys."

"H — m — m; there might be something in it," the manager replied.

"Might be!" I echoed, and, by way of final argument, I slipped on the bear's head and again ran out the "dee-lighted" tongue. A yell of laughter, which swept away the manager's last doubt, burst from the crowd that was watching us through the glass partition.

When it came to the question of terms, he was disposed to haggle a little, but seeing that I had my man, I drew on my scant remaining store of business experience and adopted the methods of one Eckstein, with whom I had had dealings at various times, and began to show a Hebrew lack of interest at anything except my price.

In the end, the manager accepted my terms — a week's trial at five dollars a day, payable nightly, and the exclusive right to the Teddy-bear in Baltimore, if, at the end of that time, he chose to renew on the same basis.

It was a scream from the moment I stepped out on the platform and began to "demonstrate" toys. I put Santa Claus out of business in five minutes, and he was fired that night. The children fairly mobbed me, and, drat em! they never seemed to tire of my antics. One little devil stuck a hatpin in my leg to see if I were a real bear, and a pampered pup in velvet pants, for whom I outdanced Salome in an effort to make his mother buy a ten-dollar Teddy-bear, rewarded my efforts by lisping in a rather bored tone: "Do it thome more!" Altogether I had earned my five dollars when six o'clock came, and I was free to join the Major.

He was waiting for me outside the hotel, looking so dejected that I knew Opportunity had n't passed his way. But his face brightened at the sight of me, and when I shook my five-dollar bill before his eyes and cried, "Come along, Major; we're going to eat," it was fairly transfigured.

"My deah boy!" he exclaimed. "This is indeed riches! I was just goin' to call a cab

to take us to the poorhouse. But now, suh, we can taste a little real food, unless," and his face fell, "this is a case five."

"There's more where that came from," I assured him; "I've got a steady job," and I told him of my good fortune, using a good many asterisks when I got up to explaining how the Teddy-bear suit happened to be in Baltimore.

The Major did n't reproach me, but he looked thoughtful when I told him how the children had ragged me, and said: "I suppose you must stick it out fo' a week, Jack, if I can't turn up somethin', and we will economise until we can scrape together carfare to New York. I can always get a stake there." So we did n't dine that night, after all; only had something to eat.

Nothing turned up — nothing ever does when you really need it — and I had to keep right on being the frolicsome, light-hearted bear for the little ones. "Luck," as the Major said to me one night in our dingy little room, "hates the unlucky. When you 're down to white chips she deals you ten high. If you had a little mo' sense, suh, in yo' blank head, and a little less sentiment in yo' dashed heart, you 'd quit me the first chance you got. I'm not only a dead weight, but I'm pullin' downhill. I have n't had such a hoodoo since the wah."

At the end of the week, we found ourselves only a dollar or two nearer New York, for though we had lived as closely as we could, there had been linen to buy, and that had taken our little surplus. I had small fear that my engagement at the department store would be terminated, as I had made good, but on Saturday morning when I went to work, I had an idea for extricating ourselves from our difficulties. So, instead of getting into my Teddy-bear suit, I made straight for the manager's office.

"Want to find out about next week?" he inquired.

"No," I replied; "I want to leave. I'm going to New York to-day, for I've interested capital there in my invention. If you want to keep the Teddy-bear suit you can have it and the exclusive right to use it in Baltimore for a hundred dollars. It would cost you five, and well worth it, as you know, if I was n't hard up."

Well, there was a lot of the painful and ungentlemanly haggling which seems so inseparable from a business transaction, but the upshot of the matter was that I hurried back to the Major with a hundred dollars. Twenty of this went to buy a postal order to cover our unliquidated hotel bill on the East Shore. The Major inclosed this to Miss Lynn in a letter which was

written in his best manner, very cold and stately, in which he requested her to forward our baggage to the little New York hotel at which we planned to put up.

An hour later, seated in the smoking compartment of a north-bound Pullman, the Major looked out at the suburbs of Baltimore over his before-luncheon "warning." There was a faint colour in his cheeks, a sparkle in his eye, and the chastening of the past week was rapidly disappearing from his manner.

"I have a presentiment, Jack," he began, "a conviction, I might say, suh, that the blank luck is about to change. You may consider this hundred as simply a first and triflin' installment on account of favours which we are about to receive."

I was feeling too happy at escaping from Baltimore to chill the Major's spirits with any doubts, so I did not tell him that during the past week I had been disturbed by a growing conviction that there was an intimate connection between luck and work. By a curious coincidence, the lucky men, so far as I had been able to see, all had jobs and liked them; the unlucky ones either did n't have jobs or did n't like them. I knew that work would have to be an acquired taste with me, but I had determined to get a job and to cultivate a taste for it as an ambitious

Freshman would a thirst for beer. I did rather despair, though, of ever being able to emulate those fellows who get down before hours, and bolt a piece of pie at noon in their hurry to get back, and have to be shooed out of the office at night, so that the janitors can clean up. There ought, even in work, to be a happy medium, I thought, and I reckoned it was a safe bet that I should find it. At this conclusion, I looked across at the Major, to see if he had read my guilty thoughts in my face, but he was lost in pleasant reverie, and singing softly to himself:

“Hold the fo’t
Fo’ I am comin’—”

Then, catching my eye, he lifted his glass and continued: “Yo’ health, suh, and happy days. Very poor Bou’bon. Most inferior. Let us go fo’ward and see if the dashed monopoly that runs these dinin’-cars can offer anythin’ fit fo’ a gentleman to eat.”

Crossing on the ferry from Jersey to New York, the old fellow insisted on standing out front, where he could pick out the familiar landmarks. A distant glimpse of the Statue of Liberty stirred him to exclaim, “A fine woman, suh! God bless her!” and a passing Pennsylvania ferry-boat called forth, “A marvellous system, Jack, the creation of a master mind! Think, suh, that

if it were n't fo' the progressiveness of its builders, we should be sca'cely twenty miles out of Baltimo' at this blessed minute, even if we 'd been ridin' fo' liberty like Paul Revere." And again, less excitedly now: "I must be growin' old, Jack, fo' I plum lost my nerve in Baltimo'. Reckoned I never would get back here again. Dash these second-rate cities, anyway! I don't feel safe in them. If you go broke, you might as well rent a house and register fo' the next election, because the only man that you know well enough to touch is out West on a business trip. If you've got money, and have to stay a while to trim a little mo' from the natives, you can't go to the theatre, because the shows are all blank road companies takin' out last year's plays; if you want a drink, the dashed town has just gone dry; if you want a little relaxation at cards, the house has just been pulled. The only thing you can do is to walk down one side of Main Street and back on the other, and then you're apt to be run in as a suspicious character, because you're a stranger. But here, in New York, there is somethin' doin' every minute, and even the seconds are tol'ably busy. If the front do' closes, the back do' opens. If they have to shut that, you can come down through the scuttle, or go up by the fire escape. It's the blankest, resou'cefullest, thoughtfullest

town in creation. If you want money, all you 've got to do is to walk up Broadway from Twenty-third to Fo'ty-second, and you 've found yo' man — or some one else who 'll answer just as well. If yo' scheme fails on one block, all you 've got to do is to walk around the corner and begin life over again. No, suh, unless I 've an independent income from Government bonds, and can affo'd to farm a plantation back home, you give me —— ”

Just then the boat bumped into the ferry slip, and, in the scramble ashore, the Major's peroration was lost. Half-way to the street, we met the crowd hurrying to catch the outgoing boat, and in it we came face to face with the Governor. It was the first time I had seen him since we parted in his library, and it gave me a horrid start. I made an effort to dodge, but it was too late. We were almost on him, and his keen eyes were already fixed on us. So I raised my hat with a muttered, “Good afternoon, sir.” To my surprise, he returned the salutation, and, as he came abreast of me, added in a really hearty voice: “Glad to see you looking so well, Jack.”

He kept right on to his boat, but, coming from the Governor, this was a distinctly friendly overture, and I gathered that he would not take it

amiss if I should call at the house with an olive branch. Involuntarily, I turned around to look at him again, and caught the Major regarding me intently.

"Who was that, Jack?" he asked.

"An old acquaintance — no one you know," I replied, trying to say it in an offhand manner and making a botch of it.

"Was n't it — he certainly looked amazin'ly like — old Con. Spurlock?"

"Yes," I answered shortly, knowing the Major's delicacy about asking questions when one showed that one did n't wish to be communicative.

But this time he had decided to be indelicate, and he persisted with: "Any kin of yo's?"

"Yes, we're related," I admitted. "I think I mentioned it when I first met you. But, as you can see, he is n't particularly proud of it."

"He seemed co'dial enough," the Major returned. "With all that money, the old boy ought to do somethin' handsome fo' you, Jack."

"Not he," I laughed, a little more at ease.

"Well, if he won't come down now, you can have a shy at breakin' the will," the Major suggested hopefully. "I wonder where the old scoundrel's off to in such a hurry. Probably goin' to Washington to hire some blank Brutus to stab the rate bill in the back. But he might

spare himself his pains; our honahed President is not to be trifled with in that matter, suh."

As I made no rejoinder, the conversation lapsed and then passed to other topics. Arrived at the hotel, the Major insisted on starting out at once for that productive mile between Twenty-third and Forty-second, to happen on an angel unawares, and, though I pointed out that we still had a comfortable balance, he was not to be dissuaded.

"No, suh," he explained; "I've had my lesson, and hereafter when there's a matter of business pressin' fo' attention, it's goin' to be attended to befo' I do anythin' else. The gentleman that I have selected to act as our banker might go up against a game to-night and get cleaned out — if," he added thoughtfully, "the blank idiot has n't already done it. No, suh, let me make my peace with my financial conscience, and then I'll come back and o'der some things fo' dinner that are not on the bill-of-fare."

Stretched out in a lazy chair, I lounged the early evening away in the hotel lobby, finding pleasure in the mere consciousness of being comfortably housed, and diversion in my growing appetite, knowing how thoroughly it was soon to be satisfied.

It was almost eight o'clock before the Major returned, and I hardly needed to question him

as to the result of his mission, for he swung in through the door with his ready-money walk.

"Did you get it Major?" I asked, not for information, but by way of greeting.

"I did not, suh," he returned cheerfully. "We won't need to borrow, I am happy to say, fo' I have learned that a man who owes me a considerable sum of money is in town."

"That's good," I commented, though my face must have showed disappointment — "if you get it. There's much giving the slip 'twixt the borrower and the lender."

"Not between that borrower and this lender, suh," the Major returned with a snap of his jaws. "I shall collect the money to-night. And now, suh, let us go to dinner, fo' all this business has made me confoundedly hungry."

That *was* a dinner — just six courses — but planned by the Major with the skill of a Savarin and ordered in the magnificent manner of a Louis. In fact, as we were dining at a famous French restaurant, he insisted on talking to the waiter in French, so far as a rather imperfect knowledge of the language would permit, concluding his order, I remember, with: "And — er — gas-song, apportez notre cafay outside, avec cognac — le Napolayong brandy, comprenez?"

The dinner was a rather deliberate affair, as

any dinner where the food is worthy of respect should be, and then followed a lazy hour while we puffed our meridianos selectos, and shuddered luxuriously over the hardships which we had just escaped. So pleasantly did the time pass that I forgot all about the Major's business, and I was a good deal surprised when he glanced up at the clock and exclaimed: "By Geo'ge, suh! It's almost midnight. Time fo' me to be attendin' to my little matter."

"I thought you 'd passed that up," I replied, "at least for to-night. But if you think you can find your man still, I'll trot around to the hotel and turn in."

The Major stood up. "If you don't mind, Jack," he said, "I reckon I'll ask you to go with me fo' the sake of company."

"Sure thing," I assented, certain now that the Major's debtor was some fly-by-night sporting man. So the Major led the way to the street, bundled me into a cab, and, before jumping in himself, gave some address that I didn't quite catch. He kept me pretty busy talking during the twenty-minute drive, and, while I saw in a general way that we were going up town, it was not until the cab stopped and I jumped out after the Major that I discovered that we were in front of Handy's gambling-house.

Idiot that I was, I had insisted on the Major's acting as our banker, and now the fatuous old fool was going to buck the tiger with what remained of my hundred. I strangled an impulse to yell, "Stop him, some one!" and hurried up the steps after him; but it was too late to turn him back without a scene, for the door had already opened to his sophisticated knock, and the attendant was relieving him of his coat.

"Come along, Jack," he called back over his shoulder as he started upstairs, and I stifled a naughty word and answered cheerfully, "Coming, sir." In fact, I came on the jump, hoping to find an opportunity of remonstrating with him quietly before he could begin to play.

Near the door of the gambling salon, where I caught up with him, the proprietor, Handy, was standing in his accustomed place.

"Ah, Major," he said smoothly, as soon as he saw us; "we've missed you. Back for your revenge?"

"Exactly, suh," the Major replied. "I should like to speak with you fo' a moment, Handy, somewhere out of this crowd. I should n't bother you when you're so busy, if it were n't a matter of some impo'tance to me."

There was a curious change in Handy's manner — just a shade more of formal courtesy and a

shade less of cordiality, as he answered: "Certainly, Major, though it is rather awkward at this particular time. But come this way."

He thought that he was in for a touch, as with my superior knowledge of our resources, I did, but he was obviously resigned to make the best of it. Naturally, I hung back, but the Major ran his arm through mine and said: "Come along, Jack. I want you with me." So together we followed Handy into a little office back of the gambling salon. The Major closed the door behind us.

"And now, Major, what can I do for you?" Handy began, busying himself with turning up the lights.

"I dropped in fo' a settlement on the last game," the Major replied blandly. "You remember, when I played faro here a few weeks ago?"

"Perfectly, Major; but you staked only the chips in your pile and then quit. You owe us nothing."

"Of cou'se not," the Major chuckled. "But come, Handy, you surely have n't fo'gotten that you owe me a little matter of twenty thousand dollars," and he smiled, but not with his eyes.

Handy was on guard in an instant. "Really, Major," he said seriously, "if you have any business with me, state it. I'm too busy to joke with you just now."

"My business is to collect the ten-thousand-dollar stake that I bet here the other night and the *ten thousand dollars that I won on the last turn.*" There was no smile on the Major's face when he said this, no chuckle in his voice.

Both Handy and I stepped back from him, Handy toward the bell, I toward the door. The old fellow must have turned madman or criminal, I thought, and the company of either was too promiscuous for the son of Jonas Sparlock. Of course, I immediately checked the impulse to desert the Major, but I started to do something just as foolish — to remonstrate with him.

"You've surely made a mistake, Major," I began soothingly.

"Don't meddle, suh. Listen!" the Major interrupted.

Handy was reaching for the bell. "Will you get out or be thrown out?" he snarled.

"Handy!" and the word was like a pistol shot. "Don't stir, you damned thief! I've got you covered!" As indeed the Major had, for he was gripping and pointing something in his coat pocket. "Step fo'ward. There — that will do. Now, hand over that money."

"Is this blackmail or burglary?" sneered Handy.

"It's likely to be suicide if you don't learn to choose yo' words mo' carefully when you talk to

gentlemen. Now, listen here—I met Joe Mack this afternoon. You remember he dealt the last time I played here, and I learned that I had been buckin’ a trained box. And I thought you the one really honest gambler left, Handy!” There was a note of sadness and reproach in the Major’s voice.

“He lies. I had to discharge him for stealing, and now he’s trying to get square. You’ve known me ——”

“On the contrary, suh, I am convinced that he was tellin’ the truth, and that you are the thief.”

“Of course, I’m quite powerless, Major,” replied Handy, regaining his composure; “but if you force me to give you this money, I’ll land you in the penitentiary.”

“Did n’t I see young Van Woort at the table as I came in?” demanded the Major irrelevantly.

“Per — haps. I — I think so,” admitted Handy in a voice that was n’t quite so brave.

“Then, suh, you are not powerless, and I shall give you a chance to prove yo’self an honest man. Pay me my twenty thousand dollars or go with me to the faro table — but tote fair, Handy; you know I never threaten — *while I examine the box which yo’ dealer is usin’.*”

Handy’s face was a full confession. But he still protested. “You know I could n’t do that,

Major, not to save a hundred thousand dollars. It would give the house a black eye if it were known that there had been such a suspicion even. But wait till play is over——.”

“When everything will be nicely fixed fo’ me. Tut! tut! Handy! I know you don’t deal crooked all the time — only on a night like this, when that young ass is plugin’, or like the other night, when that Pittsburg boor Manton was drop-pin’ his roll, and when yo’ bracebox came in dashed handy to skin this old sucker.”

Handy gave it up with a shrug of his shoulders, and, unlocking his desk, took out a roll of bills. “Here ’s five thousand — all the cash I’ve got. We ’re short to-night, but I ’ll write you a check for the balance.

“And stop payment befo’ breakfast. Come, Handy, quit yo’ triflin’. You can’t open yo’ front do’ fo’ business without fifty to a hundred thousand in the house roll. You ’ll find the balance you need in that safe over yonder.”

Handy opened the safe and produced the money. “You won’t mention this little misunderstanding?” he asked, as, at the Major’s request, I counted the bills.

“No; I shan’t mention it,” the Major returned contemptuously; “though I suppose I ought to go out there and expose you right now. But

when as old a bird as I am is fool enough to believe that there are square games runnin', what chance is there of keepin' those pin-feathered pin-heads from bein' plucked? Come, Jack," and we walked out with the money.

Our cab was waiting and we started back to the hotel, silent at first, for I was too stunned by the turn of affairs to think coherently, and the Major, far from showing elation, seemed plunged in gloomy reflections.

"And that, suh," he exclaimed finally, "is what faro has come to in this country! I shall never call another turn; never step foot in a gamblin'-house again. The profession has sunk even lower than my fears, and I have not, as you know, been over-optimistic about it. It is apparent, suh, that it is no longer possible to be both a gentleman and a gambler. I shall, consequently, devote my energies to some other callin'; in fact, I think I shall sho'tly take a run through our beloved Southland, with a view to buyin' a plantation and engagin' in agricultural pursuits."

"You won't need to take me along to milk the mooly cows," I suggested. "They will give down for you at the word of command."

"We 're partners, Jack," the Major returned simply, "so long as you don't find life with an old fellow too dull."

"Dull, Major?" I laughed. "I want to stay with you for the excitement of it — at least until I get nervous prostration."

The Major chuckled, and I continued:

"Where did you get that gun, Major? Both of yours are in hock."

"You mean the one I trained on Handy from my pocket? That was n't a gun, suh, but a soup-spoon which I borrowed from the dinner-table. You don't need a gun to make that kind of game come down."

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL GETS A JOB

THE morning after our visit to Handy's I was rudely disturbed by a blow in the face and a cry of "Hey, youse in dere, wake up!" Naturally, I woke up, and woke up mad; for a bellboy and a district messenger were grinning at me over the transom, and preparing to hurl another shoe after the one which had just glanced off my face. I said something strong and hasty to them.

"We thought youse was doped," the bellboy explained cheerfully, as he prepared to jump from the door-knob to the floor. "We tried paper balls before we trun the shoe, an' youse brushed 'em off as if de flies boddered youse."

I jumped out of bed and looked into the Major's room, but it was empty. "Why the deuce has the old fellow skipped out and left me to sleep all day?" I thought crossly, as I unlocked the door to admit the messenger, for there was that undefinable something in the air which tells one that the whole world has been hard at work for hours.

"What time is it?" I asked of the messenger, as he shoved a note at me.

"Twelve-thoity, boss, an' gettin' later," he grinned.

I growled and glanced at the note. It was addressed to me in the Major's handwriting.

"Where did you get this?" I demanded, a sharp and thoroughly unworthy suspicion flashing through my brain as I thought of our winning of the night before and of the Major's unaccountable disappearance without awakening me. For we had a clear understanding that I was not to be trusted until after I had had my bath, and that all pleas and promises that I would get up "in just a minute," no matter how plausible, were to be disregarded.

"From a chesty old guy in de Battery Loan and Trust," the boy returned.

"Did he want an answer?"

"Nope; he asked if I could carry a message to Garcia, an' when I said sure, he did n't give me none — just de horse laugh an' a letter to youse."

I dug up the quarter that the boy was lingering for and sat down on the edge of the bed to read the letter. As I unfolded it a slip of paper fluttered to the floor. It was a cheque for \$9,900, drawn to my order on the Battery Loan and Trust.

The Major wrote:

MY DEAR JACK:

Not since I said 'good-bye to my old commander, the gallant and universally beloved Buckner, have I faced a

situation which caused me so much sorrow, but I am afraid that we have reached the parting of the ways. For some time I have suspected that you were nearer kin to Mr. Jonas Spurlock than you admitted, and yesterday, after our accidental meeting with him, I confirmed this suspicion. Now, my dear boy, your father is prepared to forgive you if you will go to him in the proper spirit, and it would be the sheerest folly for you to continue either this unfortunate quarrel or your association with me; for after a night's reflection I am reluctantly forced to the conclusion that I am not, perhaps, the safest guide for a young man during his plastic and formative years, especially for one who will sooner or later be called to shoulder responsibilities with which I have had no experience. It would be superfluous for me to hint to one so resourceful as yourself that it might influence your father favourably if you would show him this cheque for your half of our earnings, and intimate that it represents savings from fortunate business speculations, made during the period of your regrettable separation from him. Of course, I would not counsel you to deceive your father, for I have always strongly urged the importance of perfect confidence between parent and child; but, at worst, this is only a justifiable stratagem, such as the complexities of modern business life compel our leaders of finance to practise every day, and it would give Mr. Spurlock a respect for your business abilities which, I fear, he does not at present entertain.

And now, my dear Jack, you are called to a great position, in which, I know, you will use your opportunities wisely. From that little Sabine farm in Kentucky, to which I propose shortly to retire, there to spend my declining years in improving, so far as my humble means will permit, that noblest of God's animals, the trotting horse, I shall watch your career with pride and satisfaction. And I shall always look back on the months which we have spent together as the happiest of an old fellow's life. Knowing how quixotic you are, and how easily I yield

to specious representations when my affections are concerned,
I write, instead of saying, Good-bye and God bless you.

Yours to command,

GEORGE MAGOFFIN JACKSON,

Lately Major C. S. A.

P. S. — I have paid the hotel and slipped a hundred-dollar bill in your vest pocket, the balance of your ten thousand. Your clothes came from the East Shore this morning, and are checked downstairs. With them I received a note from Miss Lynn, saying that when those Maryland mudsills returned to the church, after their scoundrelly and dastardly treatment of us, Miss Roby had taken alarm and refused to go on with the wedding. So at least we were able to save that charming woman from the clutches of an infamous and blackguardly hound.

“The dear old damn fool” were the only words that came to express my feelings as I finished, but these seemed to cover the situation so adequately that I repeated them. Then I verified the hundred-dollar bill and sat down to write an answer.

You blithering old idiot, if you are mine to command, I command you to come back to the hotel instantly, for if you’re caught wandering the streets in your present condition you’ll land in the psychopathic ward. And if I went to father and showed him all that money, he’d simply think I’d added crime to incompetence; besides, not a penny of it belongs to me. I’m going to get a job, and then I’ll go to the Governor and eat dirt or Wiener wurst or any other symbol of abasement; but, until then, stop butting into my family affairs, and don’t shake your old college friend,

JACK.

That addressed, I jumped into my clothes and

hurried down to the Battery Loan and Trust. There I indorsed the cheque back to the Major and deposited it to his account. I don't know that I'd have had the courage to give it up if it had been currency, but that's the beauty of a cheque — it does n't seem like real money. My letter I persuaded the paying teller to hold fo the Major, knowing that he was likely to see the old fellow often.

For three days afterward I haunted the hotel lobbies and that magic mile of Broadway where, according to the Major, one could always meet the man that one wanted, but neither there nor at the bank did I meet mine. The Major had not been back, and so he had not received my letter. Then, one noontime, as I was turning out of Wall Street into Broadway, a familiar voice boomed out just ahead of me. "You should be proud of that boy, suh!" it was saying. "He is an honah to the name. And sharp! Why, suh, he has a perfect genius fo' finance! To my own knowledge, suh, just in one transaction, and startin' with an exceedin'ly moderate capital, he cleaned up ten thousand dollars!"

"What was the transaction and where did he get the capital?" another familiar voice asked dryly.

"Where did he get the capital, suh? Where

did he get the blank capital?" the Major thundered, evidently casting around in his mind for a suitable place. "Why, suh, he got that capital by husbandin' his resou'ces, by — er — denyin' himself the luxuries and comfo'ts; yes, suh, the dashed little comfo'ts to which he had been accustomed. It would have made yo' heart bleed if you could have seen that po' boy, as I have seen him, scrimpin' and starvin' and savin'——"

"Yes, yes," the Governor broke in impatiently, "and a fine thing for him, too! But how was he earning the money he was saving?"

I trembled for the Major, knowing how little used he was to being asked or to answering impertinent questions; but he replied, with a fine mingling of delicacy and discretion in his tone:

"That, suh, is somethin' I am not at liberty to tell without violatin' a — er — sacred confidence. Yo' son, suh, at partin' from me, asked that I leave the relation of these — er — er — intimate personal details to himself. A quite pardonable, little filial vanity, suh! I can only assure you that every blank dollar of his modest competence was acquired in ways that reflect the highest credit on both his mind and his heart," and then the Governor and the Major,

arm in arm, swung aside and into the Café Savarin.

I knew, of course, that the Major must have gone to the Governor with news of me, but I was astounded at this evidence that such cordial relations existed between the ill-assorted pair.

If it had n't been for those fool remarks of the Major's, I should have followed them into the café, but all his bombast about that modest competence, which I was no longer able to produce as proof of my business prowess, had erected a new barrier between the Governor and me, at least so it seemed to that distorted vision on one's affairs which comes with hard luck. For when a fellow's down, he's apt to lose his real pride and to acquire an imitation, which makes him abnormally sensitive about a lot of things for which nobody else cares a hoot. Big troubles unite, little ones divide, a family.

I took myself off down Broadway to a modest restaurant, and there, while the waiter was getting my order, I resumed my regular occupation of looking through the want ads. for one that did n't want me to meet dashing, brunette widow for mutual improvement; or that did n't offer light, congenial work, provided I bought a ten-dollar outfit; or that did n't insist on my investing a thousand in the business, purely as a guarantee

of good faith and that I was a sucker. Finally, among the educational items I struck this:

WANTED, a Harvard graduate of good manners and address, with experience in tutoring, to prepare bright, but backward, youth for Harvard. Call to-day at 2 P. M., at office of R. M. Bonsall, Equitable Life Building.

“Harvard graduate of good manners and address,” I repeated. “That’s me. I’ve had experience in toots and tutoring, the latter as a natural sequence to the former. And he can’t be too backward in his studies to suit me. This is where I become Professor Spurlock,” and, hastily swallowing my luncheon, I put for the Equitable Building, as it was already getting on toward two.

R. M. Bonsall was a broker, and, judging from the size and splendour of his offices and the dejected appearance of those hanging around them, a prosperous one. When I stated the nature of my errand a clerk showed me into a private room, where half a dozen pear-headed young men were waiting. They looked so all-fired intellectual that I was discouraged for a moment. Then I cheered up. I saw that if they had me stung on culture, I had them buffaloed on address, for they all seemed scared and ill at ease. Not having anything to lose, I did n’t see why I should be afraid of losing it.

One by one they were passed into a mysterious inner room, and, apparently, dropped through a trapdoor into the safety deposit vaults below, for none of them returned. As the latest comer I was ushered into the presence last.

I was not received by Mr. Bonsall, as I had expected, but by a woman—a large woman, with easy-chair curves, thickly cushioned and richly upholstered in green. She was standing when I entered the room, and she greeted me in the tone of one who is afraid that if she isn't very loud and determined when she orders the servants to do anything, they may tell her to do it herself. She was evidently on the way up from the kitchen, and not quite parlour-broke yet; for upstairs the voice of authority is low. So I greeted her with the young prince manner and handed her the high shake. She struck back gamely, if a little blindly, but I knew that I had her cowed and that the job was mine, quite regardless of where I stood on the *pons asinorum*. Take it all in all, she was as perfect a specimen of the new rich as one could find in a year's botanising at the Waldorf.

Of course, the Governor and I are so new that the paint comes off when you touch us, but he's rather proud of his blacksmith father, and I'm reconciled, because, as he pointed out to me once



I've dined with them when Lord Strathmore's old butler passed the *poulet rôti* as if he were handing around a platter of insults.

when I was asking questions with a view to blaming our family on William the Conqueror, though grandpa's face did get a little brunette from his work at the forge, it might have been worse — he might have been a coon. The Governor had always dismissed society as rot, but because he had a love of real comfort and simplicity, and a talent for picking and attaching capable people to himself, I was not long in finding out, after we came to New York and I had been around a little, that we were living like the descendants of a hundred earls — and probably a hanged sight better than if ninety-nine sporty old three-bottle ancestors, with a genius for throwing deuces and picking also-rans, had had a hack at the estates first.

I never could understand why so many of the new rich have such a passion for getting servants who hate to associate with them. But they never feel perfectly happy until they have hired the sometime coachman of the Astors to sit on their box, with his nose uptilted as if he were driving a bad smell. And I've dined with them when Lord Strathmore's old butler passed the *poulet roti* as if he were handing around a platter of insults, and, simply by the moral force of his superior manner, had every one talking in their most refined tones on topics which they fondly

hoped were meet for ears that once had listened to the conversation of an earl. Whenever I'd spring a bully one they'd only smile in a shocked, uneasy way, as if to warn me that the butler was present.

Mrs. Bonsall was right off that bolt, and as soon as her snobbish soul grasped the fact that I could give the high shake with just the right degree of languid interest in the performance, her questions about my educational qualifications became perfunctory. And when I concluded a modest statement of my virtues with a significant pause, implying that there were a lot of perfectly bully things about myself which I could tell her, if I were the sort of man who could do anything that was in such bad taste, she almost reached for me. Then I added delicately:

"Of course, there are a great many things besides books that a young man who will occupy your son's social position at Harvard should know," and it was all over but the references. In fact, she forget to ask for them, but, as I was rising to leave, I thought it wise to say:

"And, oh! I'd almost forgotten. I've been travelling lately with Major Jackson as a sort of companion and all that kind of thing—the Kentucky Jacksons, you know."

She did n't, but she nodded eagerly, for I said

it in that of-course-everybody-knows-the-Kentucky-Jacksons tone.

"He's out of town for a few days," I continued, "but a letter in care of his bankers will find him." And then I left, engaged at sixty dollars a month, and under instructions to report at Mrs. Bonsall's Long Island country place the following morning.

When I got back to the hotel I addressed a letter to the Major in the care of the bank, telling him about my new job and begging him to turn loose all his adjectives on Mrs. Bonsall if she wrote him for a reference. With what remained of my hundred dollars I paid my hotel bill and withdrew another installment of my wardrobe from the moth balls of Israel.

Chiddingston Manor, the Bonsall country place, at which I duly reported next morning, was in the Hempstead district of Long Island. It was a large Tudor house, with a Louis Quinze terrace out front and an Italian pergola leading to an Indian temple out back. There were stables and garages, and dairies and henneries, and conservatories and graperies, and shrubberies and nurseries, with English sundials and French statuary scattered tastily through the grounds, not to mention a Dutch wind-mill, an Italian well, and a bronze fountain which looked as if it

might have been erected to the memory of the brave boys who fell at Appomattox.

Inside it was like one of these ideal sections of fossiliferous strata from which one can gather the age and previous condition of our little planet. Most American houses tell their owners' stories in just the same way. The lower floor, or flush time deposit, in the Bonsall mansion, was a decorator's dream of an order to go as far as he liked, just so the money showed. The result was as perfect an example of the begilt, the bedizened and the begosh school of decoration as I have ever seen. Everything was new, even the things which looked old, and everything was as overdone as a soubrette taking supper at Rector's, from the walls, which were hung in heavy figured stuffs, to the tortured and tapestried furniture. Mrs. Bonsall explained to me later that the decorator had robbed Europe of its treasures for the house, and I answered — to myself — that he deserved twenty years for it.

The second floor was furnished from the city house which the Bonsalls had occupied just before the big bulge in Southern Pacific landed them on top, and everything there was as shiny and plushy as bad taste can demand and a cheap department store supply. My own room, on the third floor, dated back to their Harlem-

flat period, and it was simply an installment plan outrage.

Outside, the place was a combination of public park and zoo; inside, it was a combination of hotel and hell. There was a little of everything in the world on that two hundred acres except comfort and good taste. It had been dedicated to its owners' vanity in having things that other people could n't afford, and they had them.

One felt instinctively that no one had ever been born or had ever died in the house; that no self-respecting person ever would consent to be born or to die in it. One knew that the only keen joys which people who would live there could feel would be over winnings; the only bitter griefs over losses.

From Mrs. Bonsall's manner of receiving me, I saw that she was determined to put me in my proper place right at the start, but, when she explained in her most determined manner that I was to act as a sort of household secretary, in addition to my work as tutor, I foiled her by being as humble as a poor relation, instead of saying, as she had evidently expected, that "I was n't hired to do all them works." Mrs. Bonsall would n't keep a housekeeper, and she could n't keep her servants, for she was torn with dark doubts of their honesty, filled with agonised

certainty of their wastefulness. Life for her was one long snoop about the house, looking for things to which a woman who has been accustomed to an establishment closes her eyes.

My charge, Master Clarence, was out taking a spin in his motor, so, after settling myself in my room, I wandered over to where the daughter of the house, Dorothy, aged seven, was sitting on the grass and making ineffectual efforts to coax a half-grown collie to her side. The dog knew Dorothy, but I did n't then, so I approached with confidence.

"Good morning," I said in a merry-sunshine voice; "I'm Mr. Spurlock, your brother's new tutor."

Dorothy looked me over coldly, but did n't say it.

"Are n't you going to speak to me?" I persisted, trying to convey in my tone that I just doted on little girls.

"Yes; go away."

Even that did n't discourage me. I was hired to please, and this seemed the place to start right in to earn my salary. So I persisted coaxingly:

"But I've come to play with you, Dorothy; I know a lovely new game."

"What is it?" she demanded.

"Well," I started in, rather taken aback by her directness, "you choose a bush and I'll choose

a bush, and we'll make believe that they're perfectly beautiful palaces, and that we're dreadfully rich, and ——"

"Rats!" interrupted young hopeful; "I don't have to make believe that; I *am* rich." And she turned her back on me.

I gave Dorothy up. When Clarence returned I found him worse, because he was older, but I could n't give him up and keep my salary. He was a pasty, pimply-faced youth of sixteen, who had come home in disgrace from a very "exclusive school for young gentlemen," so it must have been something pretty bad. There he had been taught a little Latin, a little Greek, and everything about being a little bounder that he had n't learned at home. He smoked cigarettes on the sly, and never told the truth except to hurt somebody's feelings.

Naturally, I expected that the husband and father of this outfit must be a colossus of weakness and vice, but when I met him at dinner he proved to be a quiet, forceful man, who neither smoked nor drank, and, with the fatalism of the average American father, rarely questioned his wife's primacy in the household. He was proud of his big place, not because he enjoyed it, for he contented himself with an hour's walk around the grounds Sunday afternoons, but because it

advertised him as being just as successful as the next fellow, and more so than most. Mr. Morgan bought old masters; so he bought them. Mr. Vanderbilt kept fancy cows and horses; so he kept them. If he had heard that Mr. Astor had a penchant for monkeys, he would have gravely built a monkey house and have cabled for a supply of the most expensive breed. Apparently it had never occurred to him that he could do anything or like anything which other rich men had n't stamped as the correct things to do and to like. Sometimes, when he was n't too busy, he would show vague signs of uneasiness at his son's tastes, and wonder if he would n't really be better off if he were taught something useful, but usually he was too busy. He had a big deal on, and almost every evening two or three of his business associates came out from town with him, and they spent half the night planning to take the hide off a little bunch of Wall Street citizens whom they were engaged in rounding up.

Other nights madam would entertain those neighbours who were as rich as we were, and who, like ourselves, were waiting, striving, and abasing themselves for an invitation from those other neighbours who were just as rich, but had had their money longer. I was called in sometimes to fill out at these dinners, and it diverted me

immensely to hear these friends, each of whom was prepared to cut the others at the first sign of recognition from the elect, lie about their acquaintance with the superior beings who let them subscribe to their charities, but could n't remember their names except on a cheque. I saw that the much-advertised Digger Indians are pikers at dirt-eating beside a bunch of new rich who are trying to get in.

And does money talk? The conversation dripped dollars! No name was mentioned without a rating; no emotion but was interpreted in terms of money. I remember one night, when Mrs. Bonsall, trying to impress an even richer guest with the completeness of our place, told her that our brook had just been stocked with trout.

"Trout! Tre-out!" repeated the richer one. "*Our* brook is stocked with goldfish." There was in her tone a delicious mingling of superiority and of surprise that anyone who could afford the nobbier and showier goldfish would be guilty of such a piscatorial *faux pas* as stocking a stream with the sober and shrinking trout.

Some way I managed to hold my place and even to get along with these people, after I learned that I must n't joke about money, that being the sacred subject and only to be approached reverently. I tried to teach Clarence that it was a foolish

waste of material to lie except in a case of necessity; that unlimited cigarettes would give Dorothy a chance to hog the whole inheritance; and that there was nothing inherently disgraceful in not getting drunk whenever he was allowed to go to the theatre with one of his puppy friends. But, failing in these things, I settled down to make his lessons as unpleasant for him as possible. This necessitated the first hard studying that I had ever done, so every night I went to my room and boned up for the next day. Then, too, I was indulging a vice of my own, for I had become fired with an ambition to become a reporter, and I was engaged in writing a novel — that, to my guileless mind, seeming the natural way to break in.

My first month was almost up, but the letter from the Major, for which I had secretly been hoping all along, had not come. So finally I began to plan a trip to town to see how the Governor was disposed toward me. If he were friendly, I'd ask him for a modest blessing; if he were n't, I could fall back on my present job.

And then, right after luncheon one day, the Major's card was brought in to me. He was standing by a window when I came into the reception-room, a truly splendid figure, well-groomed and well-poised, the first man I had seen in that house who looked the thoroughbred.

"Well, Benedict Arnold Iscariot!" I called from the threshold, and the Major came running. "Jack, my deah boy!" he exclaimed, and he grasped my hand and pumped it up and down till tears began to run out of my eyes.

"Where the blank have you been all this time?" he asked reproachfully as I broke away. "We 've been huntin' New York high and low fo' you fo' a month. Yo' father's mighty worried about you, Jack. You should n't do him this way."

"But my letters told you where I was," I protested.

"Yes, suh, and that 's how I happen to be here now. But I never got those letters until this mo'nin'."

"Here, let 's get outside, where we can talk," I suggested, and I piloted the Major out of the house.

"This is dashed sad, Jack," the Major commented as we passed through the great gates to the public road.

"I don't think there 's anything so confoundedly sad about it," I returned. "I 've got the first real job of my life, and I 'm earning money, too, you bet."

"I did n't refer to you," the Major returned, "but to this blank piece of vulgah Neroism," and he indicated the grounds that we had just

left. "To one, suh, whose tastes were fo'med in the old days, when the classic simplicity of our Southern homes expressed the breedin' of their owners, this so't of thing is very painful. Blood will tell, suh, and bad blood will tell on itself, no matter how hard the architect may try to impress reticence on it."

"True for you, Major; and now, how's the Governor."

"Yo' father is well, Jack, and expectin' you; we're goin' to dine with him at eight sharp to-night."

"I'm not so sure about that," I countered. Though for weeks I had been ardently desiring such an invitation, now that the way was open I shrank from the awkwardness of that first five minutes. Besides, I wanted to find out just how far the Governor was willing to go in forgiving me before I committed myself to forgiving him wholly. I was feeling pretty tame, but I still had a little of that perverse pride which keeps up half the foolish quarrels in the world — that pride which makes a fellow fear that a generous overture will be construed as a confession of weakness.

The Major, however, proved to be the prince of peacemakers. I had overheard enough to guess what line he had been working along with

father, and now the old fellow went right to my weak spot with:

"Quit yo' meanness, Jack. Have n't you any human feelin's? Have n't you any blank bowels of compassion? Don't you know that yo' po' old father has been eatin' his dashed heart out, grievin', waitin', hopin', listenin', night after night, fo' the footsteps of his wanderin' boy?"

"He's had a queer way of showing it," I demurred.

"How else could he show it, suh, when his only son, the boy that he was dependin' on to be the prop and comfo't of his old age, after breakin' his heart, left his home to conso't with profligate companions? Naturally, suh, he felt outraged in his finest feelin's."

"You were the profligate companions, Major," I retorted with a grin. "And the rest of it was n't so one-sided as you argue."

"I know that, Jack," the Major answered in a milder tone. "Yo' father's a powerful hand to make money, but raisin' children does n't seem to be his game. Now I reckon he's beginnin' to understand that first he was too weak and then too harsh with you; that he tried to correct one series of mistakes with another; in sho't, suh, that he whip-sawed himself off the blank boa'd. He's not the kind to do any apologisin', but he wants to

see you mighty bad, Jack, and just now he really needs you."

"Needs me? Why?" I questioned, impressed by something in the Major's manner.

"Don't you read the blank newspapers, suh? Have n't you seen how that man in the White House has been houndin' him, exhaustin' the vocabulary of vituperation on him and our other great leaders of finance, abusin' them as malefactors and criminals, and stirrin' up lawsuits against them? We 've come to a pretty pass, suh, when the Chief Executive undermines confidence, destroys prosperity, and wrecks business by violent and ill-considered tirades against men like yo' honahed father."

And this from the author of that speech against "the hell-houns' of the System!" I stopped short in the road and fixed the old fellow with an accusing eye.

"Major, you 've been making money," I declared.

For a moment — but to do him justice, for only a moment — the Major looked foolish. Then his chest swelled up, as it always did when he was preparing to bluff a thing out.

"Dash it all, Jack!" he exploded, "why should n't I make money? Is it a blank crime to make money in this dashed country? Don't

tell me, suh, that you, too, are infected with the prevailin' contagion! That, just because I have been tryin' to lay by some little provision against want in my old age, I am to be branded as a criminal and hounded to a felon's grave. I will not submit to it, suh — not even from you, Jack!"

"Where did you get it? Been speculating?" I asked, utterly ignoring this outburst.

"My operations on the Exchange have not been unsuccessful," the Major returned, his wrath abating, but still on his dignity.

"Bully for you! I hope you got away with a bale of their predatory wealth! I'm with Tom Lawson — all for busting the System by taking their hellish gains away from them," I explained.

At this condoning of his defection to the enemy, the Major immediately came off the defensive: "Why did n't I know about this speculatin' business sooner?" he demanded. "It's my game, suh. You can bet the market to win, or copper it, and the house gets its regular rake-off. It's just like faro and it's dealt crooked just as often, only, by Geo'ge, suh, *it's respectable!*"

"And the Governor's been giving you tips?" I hazarded.

"Ye — es; I suppose you'd call them tips,"

the Major replied hesitatingly, "though I have n't been playin' them exactly."

"How not exactly?"

"Well, suh, it's like this: While I did not doubt the sincerity of yo' father's belief in the stocks which he recommended — in fact, I have every reason to suppose that his misplaced confidence in them has cost him a considerable sum of money — my trainin' has made me exceedin'ly slow to follow the advice of anyone that has an interest in the house — and yo' father deals oftener than he plays. So I coppered his information, and, instead of buyin', sold sho't."

"Fine," I chuckled. "And made a hog-killing, by that self-satisfied gleam in your eye."

"Not as such things go on 'Change," the Major protested modestly. "But by pressin' the blank luck with a judicious doublin' of my bets, I have managed to clean up about *two hundred thousand dollars*."

"Hush, Major, and quit your fooling. Talk figures that I can understand. Remember, I'm getting sixty a month and board, and so far I've only seen the board."

"I'm not foolin', Jack. I've bit every blank dollar so often to make sure that I was n't dreamin', that my teeth are wo'n down like an old houn' dog's."

I stopped short in the road and looked him over. He was undoubtedly in earnest and not crazy — at least not crazier than usual. “Then, Major, salt it,” I implored. “Bury it, tie it up in trust, buy an annuity, get yourself arrested and locked up, anything that ’ll fix you so you can’t go back to Wall Street for more,” and I grabbed his arm as if he were about to bolt back to break the bank.

“My deah Jack,” the simple old fox answered. “I retired from business yesterday mo’nin’ and invested my principal in bonds, a fo’m of wealth to which I have always been extremely partial. At the favourable prices prevailin’, owin’ to the injudicious attacks of the President on vested interests, they will yield me a little mo’ than ten thousand a year — not much by the extravagant standards of the age, but enough fo’ an old fellow of my simple tastes. As fo’ goin’ back fo’ mo’, only a blank business man would do that. One whose profession, like mine, suh, has necessitated a close study of the laws of chance, knows that to tempt Fo’tune again, after such a run of luck, would be to tempt her to administer the chastisement that such unworthy hoggishness would deserve. I’ve been waitin’ twenty years fo’ the blank luck to change, and now that it has changed I ’m goin’ to play a certainty. The only certainty I

know of suh, 'is first mo'tgage bonds, with the interest payable semi-annually in gold at yo' bankers," and the Major parted with the last of his dignity in a whoop of joy. Then for ten minutes we fraternised all over the road, shaking hands, slapping each other on the back, and exchanging incoherent sentences beginning, "You told me the blank luck was due to change when we were ——" and, "To think, suh, that only a few weeks ago, in Baltimo', we were sufferin' fo' the bare ——"

A long squabble over the cheque which I had turned back to the Major's account followed, but finally I made him see that I could n't take half his winnings when he had furnished the stake, the luck, and the wit to know that he had been cheated. My contention that, if the Governor and I were to be friends, I should start fair with him and not employ even a "justifiable stratagem" to win his good opinion, brought him grudgingly to my way of thinking. Then I persuaded him that in common decency I could n't leave the Bonsalls before the next morning, so we pushed on to the village, where the Major telephoned the Governor that it was all right, but to postpone the dinner for twenty-four hours and on no account to forget the terrapin.

As it was still early and lessons were over for

the day, the Major decided to return to the Bonsalls with me. Half-way there we stepped aside to yield the road to a horseman who was cantering toward us on a hunter which the Major viewed with approving eyes. But, instead of keeping on, the man pulled up when he saw us, and sang out joyously:

"Hullo, sporty boy Spur! Where did you come from?"

It was Owen Corliss, an old Harvard pal, whose family I had often heard the Bonsalls mention with mingled despair and reverence, for they had held their union cards in the Four Hundred for a generation.

I was n't glad to meet Owen, but I answered cordially and sought to divert his attention from myself by introducing the Major. But he persisted in being glad to see me.

"Where you stopping?" he demanded.

"At the Bonsalls," I admitted, and added by way of palliation, "but I'm going back to town to-morrow." On occasion I can be something of a snob myself.

"Oh," he commented politely, but expressively. Then: "I say, can't you cut out to-night and dine at our place; there's an awfully jolly crowd staying with us? And bring Major Jackson," he concluded hospitably.

I hesitated. It was a long time since I'd had any fun that I hadn't had to keep to myself, and the thought of an evening with a lot of jolly young people was more than a temptation; it was a fall. "We'll be there," I answered, and Owen rode away with a farewell, "Bully! Dinner at eight."

Mrs. Bonsall was out calling when we got back, so we went up to the school-room and, as the Major expressed a curiosity to see how the blank cards would run after his colossal luck of the past month, we started a friendly game of freeze-out.

We had hardly picked up our first hands when that tiresome cub Clarence, whom I had thought safely out of the way for the afternoon, burst into the room.

"Ho! Ho!" he exclaimed. "Caught in the act! Playin' poker! Gimme a stack."

I nodded in answer to the question in the Major's eye, for the youth's father sometimes played with him of an evening.

"What's the limit?" Clarence demanded as the Major pushed a stack toward him.

"The ceiling," I answered, for we were, of course, playing "for fun."

"And what are you calling the chips?"

"Oh! call 'em anything you please. It does n't make any difference."

"Well, let 's say a dollar apiece," and Clarence cut with a deftness that made the Major open his eyes.

It was lucky, I thought as the game proceeded, that we were n't playing for real money. I held wretched hands, and, as the Major repeatedly observed, the game was a heaven-sent warning to him. For Clarence, little demon that he was, the devil's picture-cards seemed to run in any combination which he needed to beat us.

Finally, both because the game was tiresome, now that we could n't talk freely, and because Clarence's impertinence was heating up the Major to the danger point, I made an excuse for stopping.

Clarence assented readily and began to count his chips. "These call for eighty-three bones from the Major and fifty-six from you," he said as he finished.

"Yes; you were very lucky," I replied pleasantly. "And now, if you 'll excuse us, we have a little business to talk over."

"All right; but cash in first."

There was a moment's stony silence while I looked Clarence in the eye, and saw his shriveled little soul there, though he tried to stare back unconcernedly.

"Tut! tut! Master Clarence," the Major ex-

claimed. "You know very well, suh, that we were playin' fo' fun. I'm not in the habit of gamblin' with little boys."

"Yes; I see you play for fun when you lose," sneered Clarence. "You heard me make these chips a dollar apiece. Ain't that so, Spurlock?" But he did n't look at me again.

I was too ashamed for the boy to have any heart in denying it, so I only answered:

"I did not understand it that way."

But the Major had already taken out his pocket-book and handed eighty three dollars to Clarence. "Shall I pay him fo' you, too, Jack?" he asked, more cheerfully than the circumstances seemed to warrant.

"No; I can't permit that."

"But you can give me your I O U till to-morrow," Clarence suggested. "Your wages are due then; though you should n't have played at all unless you could pay cash if you lost," he added virtuously.

"Do it, Jack," the Major commanded grimly, and I handed the young pup an I O U for fifty-six dollars of my pitiful salary.

"Well, so long," said Clarence defiantly, as he buttoned up the spoils.

"Not so fast, suh," the Major demurred. "You have n't got all that's comin' to you

yet," and, seizing the astounded youth, he laid him across his knees and spanked him lovingly, lingeringly and artistically, until he roared for mercy.

"Now go back to the servants' hall where you belong, suh," he admonished.

Once free, Clarence paused only long enough to shake his fist at us and to call back: "I 'll fix you, you damned old sharper; and you, too, Mister Jack Spurlock. You 'll be fired for this, you see if you ain't."

"And I wanted to leave a nice impression!" I exclaimed ruefully. "Well, it 's taught me one lesson: I 'll never play poker for fun again as long as I live."

There was small fear that Clarence would tell his mother about the game; he would have to invent some lie to get even. So when I saw the carriage roll up to the door a little later I went down to meet her confidently. The Major, like a brave warrior, never courted unnecessary danger, so he slipped out to a near-by summer-house to wait for me.

I caught Mrs. Bonsall in the hall, and, as usual, began with a blunder.

"Oh! Mrs. Bonsall!" I announced, "I 'm going to dine with some friends to-night, and I may not be back until late."

There was an assurance in my manner that did n't just please my lady.

"Who are these friends?" she demanded sharply. "You know I don't like to have anyone out late." From her, "anyone" meant a servant.

Even then I should have lied to her out of sheer goodness of heart, if I'd thought, for I might have known that she would n't relish the idea of my dining at a house where she was n't received. But she seemed to be in such a hurry for an answer that she rattled me, and, rather than keep a lady waiting, I told her the truth.

"With the Corlisses," and then I saw that I had done it.

"What Corlisses?" she demanded in an awful voice.

"Our neighbours," I answered with a little secret gratification, I confess, now that the mischief was done. "Owen Corliss is an old class-mate of mine."

"You can't go," she snapped. "I need you to fill a place at the table here."

"I'm afraid I'll have to go," I answered, politely, but firmly. "You see, I've already accepted."

"Then unaccept."

I still kept my temper, though I saw that,

quite regardless of the quality of Clarence's lie, I was n't going to leave that pleasant impression behind me. "I'm sorry, but it's quite impossible ——"

"If you go out to-night you need n't come back."

"As you please," I answered with aggravating coolness. "I was planning to leave you to ——"

"Pack your things and get out instantly. I'll send a cheque for your wages to your room."

"There's only four dollars due," I informed her. "And you might hand that to the butler for me; he's been very attentive. The balance belongs to Clarence."

"So that's where the poor child's spending money has been going to! You've been borrowing it of him, you rascal."

"Not exactly," I laughed. "The little devil won it from me at poker," and I left her stuttering for vowels to fill out the dashes in her expletives.

I was n't long about packing and getting one of the men to take my trunk out to the stable. As I followed it past the nursery door I saw Dorothy sitting there, scowling her dislike at me. On the instant I had a holy inspiration. Stepping inside I laid the unsuspecting brat over my knees, and gave her the first spanking she had ever had. And it was a sound one — sixty dollars' worth. Then I politely restored her to her place on the floor,

and left her gathering breath for a howl which would properly proclaim the insult to her dignity.

On the way to the stables I picked up the Major. A messenger had already brought his bag from the city, and we were soon settled in the little village hotel. There the Major skinned a hundred-dollar bill from his roll, and insisted on my taking it. "Just to give you confidence," he explained. "You look a little fagged, and money's a great tonic to the feelin's."

"I will feel better for having it in my pocket," I admitted. "To tell the truth, Major, I'm beginning to get discouraged. I seem to be an all-round frost. I came out here with the purest and holiest intentions, and look at my bum finish. I've eaten dirt for a month, and what do I make out of it? Not even a mud pie? How the deuce can I go to the Governor to-morrow and expect him to fondle me as his fair-haired boy, with this record behind me?"

"My deah Jack," the Major returned soothingly, "if you will be discreet and spare yo' father useless and painful details — no suh! I am not counselin' you to deceive him, but simply to repress yo' passion fo' harrowin' his feelin's — you will sho'tly find yo'self in touch with a bank account which will relieve you of all these so'did and ungentlemanly little worries."

I made no answer, for like every real difference in life, ours was simply a difference in the point of view. What the Bonsalls regarded as enviable elegance, was vulgar ostentation to the Corlisses. The men whom the Major called the hell-hounds of the System on an empty stomach, were our great leaders of finance after he had eaten their grouse. And to me, with a borrowed hundred-dollar bill in my pocket, the steam of the flesh-pots smelled savory; but deep down I knew that, once I'd laid on a little fat, I should not be content to wear a Wall Street ball and chain, even if it were of solid gold.

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH THE PRODIGAL GOES HOME

APPARENTLY, suh," quoth the Major, as we limped up to the Corliss front door in the village hack, "this place was built fo' a home, and not fo' a blank roadhouse."

It was a rambling old Colonial mansion, with a broad sweep of lawn down to the park of noble trees through which we had been driving. We caught glimpses of a charming old-fashioned flower garden at one side of the house, but in planting the place the owner's efforts had evidently been directed only toward enhancing its natural beauties. No anachronistic trees or shrubs had been used; nothing stuck out from the rest and clamoured for attention; everything belonged.

There was no make-up on the face of nature here — no rouging and enamelling and blondining of the simple old lady until she looked like a Broadway chorus girl. There were no hectic beds of geraniums and cannas, no varicolored foliage plants, no "specimen" trees of strange shape and habit. There was no joshing and making ridiculous the honest Long Island land-

scape. There were no fussy, little, pot-bellied evergreens from the Orient, looking like squat heathen idols; no sheared and barbered spruces, reminding one of fortune-hunting Italian counts with pointed beards; no mincing, priggish little bushes, with their hair neatly cut and plastered down; no twisted and pathetic freaks, grown and exploited by heartless nurserymen for buyers with the souls of dime-museum keepers.

A man's grounds are as good an index to his character as his house. When I pass a place where fine forest trees have been cut down to make room for parvenu plants, I know that the owner starves his poor old mother in an attic room; and when I see a lawn with knobby little evergreens and dinky little shrubs spotted all over it, and a bed of elephant's ears on one side of the drive and one of cannas on the other, I know that while the owner may have a heart of gold, he would wear tan shoes with a frock coat, and that his womenfolk are the kind who force frequent changes in the fashions by trying to follow them. So I understood and sympathised with the Major when he intimated that there was no mistaking the Corliss place for Central Park West or a Dutch beer garden.

When anyone entered the Bonsall palace everything shrieked, "How expensive I am!"

One was hit squarely between the eyes in the hallway, and landed gasping and breathless among the gilded glories of the drawing-room. But in the Corliss house there was a mellowness and harmony of colour that satisfied; an air of ease and comfort that soothed. One simply felt that everything was right and let it go at that. Nothing in the house demanded attention; everything was worth it. We felt at home even before we had been announced and welcomed in the library by Owen and his father, a *bon vivant* with a bad liver, but withal a kindly old buck and a famous antiquarian in his chosen field of research — vintage wines. He and the Major fraternised at once and were soon deep in a learned discussion on the right way to mix a mint julep. From that the conversation naturally passed to the old-fashioned whiskey-cocktail, and so movingly did the Major deplore its passing, and so eloquently did he expatiate on its merits, that when the butler brought the martinis, Mr. Corliss waved them away and asked the Major to prove his assertions. So three or four of us retired to a little den of Mr. Corliss' to witness the demonstration.

"I know, suh," began the Major when the butler returned with the ingredients, "that many gentlemen whose opinion is entitled to respect

use rye in compoundin' this — er — ambrosial beverage, but fo' myself, I have never felt that a perfect result could be obtained except with Bou'bon, a feelin' which was shared, I may add, by the mo' discriminatin' members of the Pendennis Club of Louisville, and in such matters they were, I think we may safely concede, the final authority. There, suh," he concluded, handing Mr. Corliss his; "titillate yo' palate with that, and then tell me whether I have overstated the case. I shall bow to yo' decision. There is no appeal from Cæsar, suh."

The Major touched glasses with his smiling host. "Yo' health, suh, and the old state," he gave, and they bowed to each other. As he lifted his eyes the Major caught one of the younger men gulping down his cocktail. "Drink it slowly, suh," he admonished, raising a warning hand, "and show proper respect fo' age. That Bou'bon, suh, was a contemporary of the late lamented Henry Clay."

"Is n't he an old dear?" I heard a familiar voice exclaim from the doorway behind me, and turning, I looked into the eyes of Anita Grey.

"Anita!" I gasped.

"Dee-lighted!" she laughed back, sticking out her tongue in imitation of that sickening Teddy-bear.

"What in the world are you doing here?" I demanded, ignoring the unconventional form of her greeting. Some memories are too painful. Most of mine are.

"Visiting, of course," she answered. "I'm getting to be a professional visitor nowadays." And right there our conversation was cut short by Mr. Corliss, who presented the Major to Anita and told him to take her in to dinner.

The others had all come into the library by this time, and I drew a stunning girl, but she gave me up after the first five minutes. For the sight of the Major getting acquainted with Anita had thrown me into an agony of apprehension. From my place across the table I could not catch what they were saying, but by watching their faces I could follow the course of their conversation and see how it was progressing from polite talk about country life to more personal topics. Then the Major told a story—some awful reminiscence of our life together, I was sure—and Anita began to question him eagerly. All this time I had been vainly endeavouring to catch the Major's eye, but Anita looked up suddenly and I caught hers, just when my face was contorted in a hideous warning to the Major to shut up. Anita smiled back pleasantly, made some comment which caused the Major to grin, and

then he told a new one on me which was apparently the best yet.

All through dinner their heads kept getting closer and closer — how I wished that I could bump them together — and their voices lower and lower, until by the time coffee was served they were almost whispering.

“Would she never pump him dry?” I kept asking myself fiercely. “Could n’t the old fool see that she was working him like creamery butter? Had he no decent reserves, were there no incidents in our career that he held too sacred for the casual and curious ear? Apparently not. He gave up like a trained dog. He dug up the buried bones of my awful past, and with each pat on the head scratched deeper in his memory. I had never seen the Major with a pretty woman before, but I might have known that what no man could take from him by force, any pretty woman could get for a smile. Beside him, Samson after his hair-cut was adamant with the girls. How I blamed myself for having introduced him to Owen Corliss! How I hoped that he would choke, or at least glance at me again, that I might strike him dumb with one awful look of scorn and contempt. Yet when I did finally catch his eye as the women left us, he did n’t wither, or droop even — only regarded me with a benevo-

lent smile, quite as if he expected me to feel flattered at having proved so prolific a source of humorous anecdote.

On the way to the drawing-room I could n't reproach him, because he went out arm in arm with Mr. Corliss. So I brought up the rear, my bearing in pitiful contrast to what I had planned it should be. For going out to dinner I had decided that I should at least win Anita's respect by putting up a dignified, reserved front, and then her sympathy perhaps, by hinting that my life, though dark and stormy, had been one of manly and not altogether unsuccessful effort to make a place for myself in the great world. And now the Major had made me look like the Katzenjammer kids in the eyes of the only person whom I cared to have take me seriously.

Following this unpleasant line of thought I detached myself from the other men, and slunk across the library to an open French window which gave on the terrace. As I stood there looking out at the blackness, a white arm reached in and gently pulled me outside. I did n't struggle, for before I had slunk over to the window, I had caught sight of a familiar figure disappearing through it. I was determined that the Major should n't get away with all the honours for weakness if I could prevent it.

For a moment I stood beside Anita in the light from the window, while she looked at me with serious eyes in which I saw something that made my heart beat quicker. Then, side by side, we stepped out on the lawn.

Anita broke the silence. "Tell me about it, Jack," she began softly; "tell me why you left?"

"I rather fancy the Major has done that already," I replied in a voice which, despite my efforts, was just a little aggressive.

But Anita paid no attention to that. "He told me why you'd left your father," she continued, "but I'd known that all along. What he could n't tell me was why you'd left me. And he was polite enough to say that he could n't understand it, either."

"You knew that all along!" I echoed. "You knew it when you broke your engagement with Brooke Churchill — and that night at Mrs. Hamilton's when you — when you ——"

"When I tried to propose to you," Anita said, completing the embarrassing sentence. "Yes, I knew it then."

"And still you were willing ——"

"Yes."

Then I woke up to the fact that I was holding Anita's hand, that I had been holding it ever since I had stepped through the French window.

Some way, it seemed as if it would look rude and pointed if I released it just then, even though I was determined to prove myself a lineal descendant of the early Christian martyrs before the evening was over, so I kept right on holding it. The evening had only just begun.

I wonder whether those young Romeos in novels really do make love so smoothly and talk in such poetic and well-rounded sentences to the heroine, or whether the average love-scene is n't purely fiction, a symbol, standing for an ideal result that no one ever gets, except, perhaps, the fellow who is n't in earnest. It's awfully easy to be glib and gabby when one's flirting, but when I really feel deeply I can't find many words. And when it's Anita that I'm feeling deeply about, I choke on my Adam's apple and stumble over my own feet. So I blurted it all out in a few awkward sentences.

"I love you, Anita. I always shall love you — I don't need to tell you that —"

"No; but please do, Jack. I like to hear it."

"Do you mean that, Anita? Some way, I never believed that you could love me; I can't quite believe it yet."

"But I do — dearly, Jack," Anita returned, pressing my hand by way of emphasis.

"Don't, Anita — you won't understand," I

protested. "I'm no good at anything; I'm a failure at everything. It's true I'm making up with the Governor, and I suppose he'd allowance me and make it possible for us to marry. But I don't want even you on those terms. I simply *must* fight it out."

"Of course you must, Jack, but we'll fight it out together."

"No, no," I dissented vehemently. "That would n't be decent of me or fair to you," and then I put my arm around Anita's waist and drew her to me in an agony of renunciation.

A minute later, or perhaps it was two — I don't remember — Anita said: "Now, Jack, be sensible for a minute and listen to me. You know when father died — it was dear of you to send me those violets when you were so poor — well, he did n't leave a million — only enough to give me about twelve hundred a year. And you know what twelve hundred a year means among these people. Of course, I can spend half my time living in luxury on my friends, and the other half scrimping along on my twelve hundred. If I were a little older and all this had become my fixed idea of happiness, as it would, I suppose, some day, I'd probably swallow the insults with the wine, and stoop to all the petty meannesses and make-shifts of a life of poverty in palaces."

"Or marry Brooke Churchill," I suggested, "and have a palace of your own."

"Or marry Brooke Churchill, whom I don't love," assented Anita, "or you, whom I do. I prefer to marry you, Jack. I'd rather make-believe a palace than make-believe love."

This was such dangerous ground that to keep firm in my resolution I had to take Anita in my arms and renounce her again.

"Now, dear," she continued, when the interruption was over, "we must cut New York and all its works, and go to some place where life is n't so complex ——"

"And so expensive," I added.

"And where happiness is n't things you buy, but things you do. You must find such a place, Jack, and take me there."

"I have found such a place," I answered, "and I'm going there to-morrow, but it would n't be right to take you. You've heard me speak of Uncle Bill, who won't conform and who lives in his own sweet way, to the bitter disgust of the Governor. He owns a newspaper in Cañon City, a town of eight or ten thousand at the foot of the Continental Divide in Colorado, and runs a mountain ranch — one of those natural parks back in the range. Well, I wrote him last week for a job on his paper, and I got it this morning

at twenty dollars a week. It's a start, but it's only the beginning of a long pull. It's better for you to be unhappy for a little while now, than for me to take you to a frontier town, away from everything and everybody you've known and liked, and perhaps condemn you to a lifetime of unhappiness."

"I've always loved Colorado and the mountains," Anita commented irrelevantly, "and as for ranch life, I know of nothing more delightful. Twenty and twenty-five make forty-five a week. I shall be very, very economical, Jack — oh! I've been learning too! And we shall make out famously."

We were back near the house now, and I hurried toward it, for I felt that I was weakening. On the terrace I turned to say the final word to Anita.

"Don't tempt me any more, Anita," I pleaded. "You know how rotten weak I am," and I kissed her good-bye forever some ten or twenty times.

Apparently she did n't understand that it was good-bye, for she kept right on, and, of course, I could n't rush away while she was talking without seeming awfully rude.

"You can't seem to understand, Jack, that I *want* to start poor. People who start rich don't seem to *stay* married. There's something

in fighting it out together that makes love last, and I don't want anything, Jack, for which I've got to give even the least bit of your love."

"It's bully of you, Anita, to feel that way, but I can't let you do it," I protested.

Anita stamped her foot. "I did n't know you *could* be so obstinate, Jack Spurlock," she cried and disappeared through the window. I followed more slowly and saw her, with cheeks flushed and eyes sparkling, carrying on an animated conversation with the Major. Finally, after nodding reassuringly, the old fellow walked across to me.

"Step outside a minute, Jack," he began; "I want to have a little serious conversation with you."

"You bet I will," I answered, delighted at this opportunity to quarrel with some one. "What the devil do you mean by giving up your immortal soul and all my personal affairs to Anita?"

"My deah boy," the Major returned mildly, as we began to walk the terrace, "I really could n't add anything of impo'tance to the young lady's info'mation. She knows you like the Old Testament, suh, and she 's had a tola'bly good religious trainin' of the kind we used to get befo' a frivolous and light-minded generation abolished Hell. Of cou'se she was anxious to know just what you had been doin', and considerin' the tender natchah

of yo' relations with her, suh, I saw no harm in impartin' to her some of the mo' amusin' incidents ——"

"Yes, I saw you giving me the laugh," I interrupted bitterly. "But let that go now; I want to get away from here quick, before I make a bigger ass of myself than I have already."

"That, suh, would be layin' out fo' yo'self the labours of Hercules," the Major returned.

"What do you mean by that?" I demanded, angry in earnest now.

"What do I mean by that, suh? What do I mean by that?" the Major roared. "I mean, suh, that you are a blank fool; that any man who could even entertain the thought of givin' up the blankest, beautifullest creature on earth, has no dashed heart; that any man who could let cold, calculatin', so'did, mercenary considerations of how he is goin' to make a livin' interfere with his callin' that blank angel his own is a dashed coward. That 's what I mean, suh, and I repeat it."

Instead of getting angrier at the Major, the knowledge that there was one human being who approved of my marrying Anita on twenty a week gave me my first glimmer of hope.

"But, Major," I protested, seeking further encouragement, in a low, sneaking way, "you

must realise that as I am situated it would be downright dishonourable of me to marry Anita."

"You have queer ideas of honour, suh," the Major snorted. "Do you call it honourable, might I inquire, to win the heart of a trustin', confidin' girl with yo' blank Machiavellian arts and insinuatins' ways, and then to throw her over; do you consider it honourable to discuss marriage with her — don't you dare deny it, suh — and then to jilt her on the very steps of the altar; is it a part of yo' peculiar code, suh, to lure a young girl out on to a dark lawn, compromisin' her in the eyes of her childhood's friends, and then to spurn her with a heartless laugh? Dash it all, Jack, I can't stand fo' such treatment of her! It's unmanly; it's inhuman; it's — it's monstrous, suh!"

"Do you mean to threaten, Major?" I demanded in a tone that I tried to make very fierce.

"No, no, Jack," the Major protested, wilting at once. "Of cou'se I appreciate that you are actuated by the highest and most unselfish motives ——"

"You doggoned old fool," I interrupted, feeling inexpressibly annoyed; "can't you see I want to be threatened?"

The Major gripped both my hands. "You young rascal!" he bellowed delightedly. "You

come with me or I'll break every blank bone in yo' body." And he dragged me off to search for Anita.

She saw us coming and knew from the look on my face that I was coming for her. Some girls would have played coy, but Anita was n't that sort. She came to meet me, and, as the Major discreetly fell to the rear, she gave me both hands, and with them herself.

"I can make good, Anita, with you to help," I said.

"You'll make good, anyway," she answered. "But I want to be a part of it."

"Soon?" I insinuated. "If you're going to be a poor man's wife you ought to get away from all this demoralising luxury at once? Don't keep me waiting, Anita."

"You've been patient so long, Jack," she answered seriously, "that this sudden impatience sounds a little stagey. You must wait"—and she laughed as she saw my face fall—"until to-morrow afternoon." And then she ran away before I could detain her, kissing her hand and calling back that she should be frightfully busy in her room for the rest of the evening.

As there was to be no more Anita, the evening was over so far as I was concerned, and I suggested

to the Major the propriety of saying good night and of going back to the hotel, but the old fellow chuckled and answered:

"We 're not goin' back to-night, Jack; we 're goin' to stay right here. When Mr. Corliss heard that we had left the Bonsalls he sent his man to the hotel fo' our baggage. And owin' to the necessity of securin' his cooperation if we're to get an early start in the mo'nin', I think I'd better announce yo' engagement to him," which he promptly did.

Mr. Corliss was delighted with the news. "God bless my soul, Major!" he exclaimed. "I've been waiting a year for an occasion worthy of the last of the '74. We 'll have it up at once and drink the young folks' health."

Mr. Corliss routed out the spooners from their corners, drove the bridge players from their table, and sent for Anita. Then the Major, at his host's request, stood up, glass in hand, to tell what it was all about. Some way Anita and I had come together and had slipped into the background, where we could touch hands for a minute.

"Owin' to the unfo'tunate fact that I am a — er — er — bachelor," the Major began, thrusting his unoccupied hand in his shirt bosom, "I have never been blessed with — er — er — offspring." Loud cries of "Hear! Hear!" from

Mr. Corliss. "But by a singular piece of good fo'tune I have been associated in my business undertakin's durin' the past year with one fo' whom I have come to cherish all the feelin's of a father. That Mr. Spurlock has had the good taste to fall in love with my ward, Miss Grey, and the good fo'tune to find that his — er — er — sentiments are not distasteful to her, is a sou'ce of great pleasure to an old fellow who has reached that time of life when we find our greatest happiness in the happiness of others. I give you the health of my ward, Miss Grey, and of Mr. Spurlock."

There was n't a wet eye or a full glass at the end of this speech. Then, in the momentary silence that followed the drinking of the toast, we heard Owen Corliss exclaim in a hoarse, stage whisper:

"His ward! Would n't that sting you? And father introduced them four hours ago. I bet he used to propose on sight."

"And shoot, too," Anita added significantly, and she set the seal of her approval on the new relationship by kissing the Major good night and running back to her packing, for we were to make an early start next morning.

As soon as she was safely upstairs the Major cleared his throat, preparatory to firing his second sensation at the company.

"It was very careless of me," he began when he had secured the attention of everybody, "but I clean fo'got to announce that the —er — hymeneal knot will be tied to-morrow afternoon at two, and that my ward wishes me to invite you all to the ceremony at St. Aurea's and to the weddin' breakfast at Sherry's. This may, I know, seem a little —er — impetuous," he explained, in answer to the murnur of astonishment, "but business matters of great impo'tance call Mr. Spurlock West to-morrow night, and he has a distaste, amountin' to a —er — mania almost, fo' travellin' alone! As it is not possible fo' me to get away just now, I fear that my ward will have ——" The rest was drowned in a shout of laughter.

The women crowded around me, protesting that it was all too perfectly lovely, and thinking, no doubt, that it was all too perfectly crazy. I shared both beliefs. What they would have thought if they had known the true inwardness of affairs — that I was marrying on a weekly salary of small change, such as people hold out to drop in the baby's bank — is too involved a subject for speculation even. But, of course, they believed that I was still the young prince, privileged to play the fool, and able to pay alimony regularly when I got ready to settle down.

I firmly refused to figure in any farewell bach-

elor proceedings, though old Mr. Corliss was purple with pleasure at having so plausible a pretext for getting comfortably jingled. But in my time I had seen so many fellows stop on the way from a Turkish bath to call at the altar for their brides that I had no stomach for the game. I managed to get away and to take the Major with me, though rather against his will, on the plea that there were still some important details to be settled. But I really wanted a chance to ask him what he meant by inviting all those people to a church wedding and a breakfast at Sherry's. And once we were in our room I lost no time in doing it.

"That, suh, is none of yo' business," the Major answered, "but I don't mind tellin' you. It's because I don't propose that my ward shall be married befo' a magistrate like a blank parlour-maid. Somethin', suh, is due to her birth and breedin'!"

"But think of the expense of all this, Major," I protested. "You know I ——"

"I will think of it in due time, suh, when the bills come in. But what the deuce do you mean by thinkin' of it? What do you mean by thinkin' of anything except yo' affianced bride? Dash it all, Jack, this perpetual penny-shavin' and dollar-hoardin' is the only thing I don't like about you.

You must overcome it, suh, if you're ever goin' to get on in the world. The only thing you've got to do with this weddin' is to answer yes when you're spoken to and to fee the clergyman."

"But I can't even fee him until after I've touched the Governor," I explained, "unless I do it with the hundred you lent me. And father's likely to go right up in the air when I begin to talk the woolly West and this wild wedding to him."

"I think, suh, I can make him understand that my ward has done him an honour in consentin' to an alliance with a member of his family," the Major returned, bridling a little. "It is scarcely necessary fo' me to info'm you, suh, that the best and the oldest blood in the state flows in the veins of our er—the Greys. It may be mo' difficult to make Mr. Spurlock see that yo' Western plans deserve the same measure of approbation. But whatever he says, Jack, don't, I implo' you, do anythin' to excite him. Leave it all to me. Tact and diplomacy will coax along the stubbo'n-nest mule when twistin' his tail won't budge him."

I promised, and we went to bed. The Major, in lieu of prayers probably, had a habit of spending the first few minutes after the lights were out in moral and philosophical reflections, based on

the occurrences of the day, and then of imparting his conclusions to me. To-night was no exception.

"I reckon you were right, Jack, in cuttin' out that bachelor blowout, though it did seem just a little ungracious to yo' host. It might have resulted in a regrettable over-stimulation of some of the younger men, fo' this blank generation don't seem to hold its liquor right — you noticed how that young fellow was startin' in to guzzle his cocktail? And he swilled that seventy-fo' champagne like a blank shoat — all stomach and no palate."

"Then you 've come around to my way of thinking," I commented; "and you don't really believe that it's good business for a young man to drink."

"I did n't say that, Jack," the Major returned cautiously, "but I will say that I don't believe it's good business fo' a young man to get drunk. A fellow has to have a mighty level head to play around the edges of hell without fallin' in," and the Major gave a prodigious yawn, ending in a chuckle. "I've met some mighty fine people here to-night, what the niggers used to call real quality folks, but I don't know what to make of some of the women," he went on. "You know that Miss Moore?— a regular young Juno, suh. Well, dash it all, if she did n't confide to me that her father had promised her ten thousand

dollars if she wouldn't smoke until she was twenty-one. Said it would stunt her growth! What do you think of that, sub?"

"I don't think, so long as I don't have to marry her," I yawned. "I'm a young man of one idea, and just now that happens to be Anita. Thank the Lord she does n't smoke, for my salary would be just about cigarette money for her," and I turned over and pretended to go to sleep.

Mr. Corliss broke the regular habits of a lifetime by getting up before nine next morning and seeing us off in one of his motors. Our baggage was already on the way to New York in charge of his men. "I'll be waiting at the church," the old fellow called out jovially as we sputtered away from his door, and then we settled back, Anita between the Major and me, for the run through the sharp morning air.

Anita and I were n't very talky, for with the Major there beside us we could n't talk about the only thing in the world worth mentioning, but she gave me some silent treatments with her eyes that were mighty comforting. I don't believe that we'd have said much even if we'd been alone. The Major, too, during the first part of the ride, was silent. His face reflected a judicious mixture of dignity and joy, which told me that he was alternately thinking over the coming battle with

the Governor and his part in the wedding ceremony. Finally, however, he seemed to have conked over his rôles in both affairs to his satisfaction, and then, mile by mile, his spirits mounted until they culminated in a burst of melancholy song:

Oh! they buried her down in Geo'gia,
 Darlin' Nellie that I loved so true,
 And the cypress weeps over her tombstone,
 And the ——

"Dash it all, Jack! I reckon you may be right about quittin' New York," he broke off suddenly. "It's as bad to be rich there as it is to be po'. The only people who get any fun out of livin' in the blank town are those who have just enough so that they can pity the po' and envy the rich."

"Then you'd better leave it, Major," I answered, voicing a thought which had been in my mind all along, "and follow us out to God's country."

"That's worth considerin', suh," the Major returned enthusiastically. "I have always had a great partiality fo' the West; a strange, and, as I look at it now, a prophetic conviction that I should end my days there. While the interests of the trottin' ho'se have always had a peculiar hold on my affections, we seldom find it possible to marry our first sweethearts, and it would be

a not ignoble ambition to improve the breed of the American steer. Much has been done, suh, toward sho'tenin' the ho'ns of that useful animal. I firmly believe that by careful selection and breedin' the blank ho'ns can be eliminated altogether!"

"I should n't be surprised, Major," I returned judicially, though I did n't know just why anyone should want to eliminate the blank horns. "It would be worth trying, anyway."

"Worth tryin', suh! The man who can accomplish that will be a benefactor of the race whom comin' generations will delight to honah. Jack, this all sounds mighty good to me. There is somethin' about the freedom and dignity of ranch life which appeals to me powerfully. I have often dreamed, suh, of sittin' under my own vine and fig tree, watchin' the cattle on a thousand hills fattenin' themselves fo' my pleasure and profit. And there's somethin' in the Western climate which breeds men. They grow tall at that altitude, and have big hearts. The mountains teach them to hate the little, mean, triflin' things. They tell the truth out there, suh, fo' the lie means a blow. And when a man has to fight when he's called a liar, he's mighty careful about how he lies. But if one man calls another a liar in this blank town, what happens? Nothin', suh! He

simply says, 'You're another,' and by Geo'ge, suh! they're both satisfied, because it's true."

In such fashion did the Major beguile the journey until we had dropped Anita, to meet her again at the church door, and had dismissed the car in front of the Governor's building.

There was quite a craning of necks and whispering among the clerks when we entered the office, but it stopped suddenly when the Major inquired loudly of Horton, the Governor's secretary, whether he was "runnin' a blank rubberneck wagon." He left me in the outer room saying: "I reckon I'd better go in first and prepare yo' father," a proposition to which I assented readily enough, for I felt that I needed a little preparing myself.

The Major returned in a minute and whispered: "Come along, Jack, though I fear we have hit on a singularly unfo'tunate day. From the fluency with which yo' father's cussin' the market, it looks as if you might have come home to a skinned bull, instead of a fatted calf."

I need n't have been afraid. The great scene for which I had been steeling myself began as tamely as the opening of a Sunday School, though not with prayer. Whatever the object of the Governor's wrath, he lacked that versatility in anger which would have enabled him to shift it to me. He was standing at the ticker when I

entered the room, cussing to himself with a monotonous repetition of epithet. As I had once pointed out to him, he should n't have sworn, for he lacked that gift of improvisation which alone can justify the use of strong language.

He dropped the tape when he saw me, took my hand, and, in a voice which he vainly tried to make less of a growl, told me to sit down.

"I'm glad to see you Jack, but I can't talk to you but a minute now, for I'm up to my ears in work to-day; you'd better take the Major to the house and we'll all dine together to-night."

I was about to reply that I had business on hand which would n't wait, when the Major exploded:

"We're not goin' to do anything of the so't. You go right on with yo' cussin,' suh, and Jack and I will sit down here until you need a little breathin' spell. Then we'll talk to you. Jack has some things to say that won't hold over till evenin'."

The Governor looked annoyed, and seemed to be on the point of ordering us out, but he thought better of it. There appeared to be some curious bond of sympathy, and of affection even, between him and the Major, which was utterly inexplicable on any rational grounds. Their friendship was apparently based on one of those attractions of

opposites which makes people exclaim: "What *does* she see in him?"

Finally, the Governor reluctantly surrendered the tape and came over to us.

"I don't suppose there's any particular use in following the details of this damned robbery any further," he growled. "Let's hear about your business, Jack."

"What have they been doin' to you, Spurlock?" the Major inquired genially. "Yo' face is so long and yo' manner so sho't that I judge the blank market has whip-sawed you."

"I've been held up," the Governor growled fiercely. "They've taken away the railroad to which I've given my life's blood for the last ten years — the railroad that I've built up from nothing into a great system. That's what the damned scoundrels have done, Major, but I'll make them sweat for it yet. I'll teach them to trespass on my side of the fence if it takes the last dollar I've got." And the Governor quivered with honest indignation.

I don't know much about the railroad business, but I had received the impression from the newspapers that it was the railroad, and not the Governor, which had given up its life's blood as a consequence of their association. I remembered that whenever the press was short of a financial

scandal it told how he had bought I. & P. for nothing, had issued the whole fifty-seven varieties of railroad securities against the purchase price, and had declared a 10 per cent. semi-annual deficit ever since. But that's a detail. Apparently he had lost this valuable nothing and felt sore about it.

"You don't mean to tell me that you've lost control of Illinois and Pacific?" the Major inquired incredulously. "That *would* be a hellish piece of business, suh."

"That's what I do mean -- it's been stolen by that Bonsall bunch of high-binders."

"But how could that happen, suh, when you own the controllin' interest?" the Major persisted.

"Owned," the Governor corrected bitterly. "There's no harm in telling you the story now, for the papers will have it to-morrow. I saw this panic coming and foolishly let go a good deal of my stock -- enough to lose control, in fact -- expecting to make a little turn and pick it up lower. Then, when things got pretty well down, I picked up a big line of Chicago and Seattle, Bonsall's road, before I tried to get back my Illinois and Pacific. As you know, C. & S. is a much better dividend payer, and it was bound to respond on the upward movement before I. & P. It never occurred to me that that unscrupulous

Bonsall would dare to cut in behind me and steal my own road. But he did, as I've found out since I tried to get back my stock. The minute I went into the market for it, I. & P. jumped like a jack rabbit, while C. & S. has only gone up a few points."

Someway this business that the Governor was talking about had a familiar ring — and then I remembered. I had heard scraps of conversation about this very deal while I was at the Bonsalls, without understanding at the time what it all meant. I had n't even connected I. & P. with the Governor.

"Why!" I exclaimed, speaking as usual without thinking, "that must have been what they were always talking over at the Bonsalls!"

The Governor rounded on me with a jump like a polo pony: "At the Bonsalls, eh! You've been at the Bonsalls have you? Siding with the enemies of your own father again?"

I stifled the hot answer that came to my lips, and before I could give a tactful one the Major replied for me:

"Yes, suh, earnin' an honest livin' there, after his own father had turned him from his do'."

I was too excited by an idea which had just come to me to care a rap now for either the Governor's reproaches or the Major's heroics, so instead of supplementing his explanation, I burst out:

"Why, Governor! I believe that the Bonsalls have been up to the same game as you have. I know that they sold a lot of their C. & S. while they were buying your I. & P., expecting to get it back lower. They only hold control of C. & S. now through the Antrim estate stock, unless they've taken back the rest of their own stock during the last week, but the Antrim people are friendly to them. If you could buy that Antrim stock and add it to what you've got, you'd simply have swapped railroads, and have a bang up dividend-paying system, instead of a bum jerk-water one."

It was as if some one had handed the Governor a ticket for a fourth-row seat on the aisle in heaven. Without a word he reached for the telephone and called up his man on the floor.

"Give them as much of our I. & P. as they want," he ordered. "Buy all the C. & S. you can get without running the price up too fast — yes, that's what I said. All — you — can — buy. Round up your men and get busy."

"Jack," he said, turning to me as he dropped the receiver. "You're not such a damn fool as I thought."

"Thank you, sir," I answered modestly. "I could have given you first hand information about that long ago."

"And you even seem to have some natural talent for high finance," he continued.

"You don't call that high finance, do you?" I asked. "There's more high finance than that in a poker game — and more honour," I added, but that last was to myself.

"That's his blank pose, suh," the Major broke in. "Pretendin' all the time that he does n't know anythin' about business. But he can't deceive me any mo'. He's shrewd, Spurlock, as I've been tellin' you all along; and he simply has a genius fo' finance."

The Governor reached for his hat. "I'm going to get the right man after that Antrim stock. They've been hit in the panic, and a good price will buy it, if they think it's going to interests that are friendly to Bonsall. Oh, I'll see that it gets into friendly hands! Gad! but Bonsall shall sweat for this. You stay right here till I get back, Jack. I'm not going to forget this."

"And I'll walk down the street with you," the Major ventured. Then, in an aside to me: "You wait here and I'll break it to him about yo' marriage. This is the psychological moment," and he followed the Governor.

They were back in an hour, the Major's face graver and the Governor's sterner than I had hoped to see them. My heart sank again.

"I've got that stock, Jack, where I can take it over when I need it," the Governor began. "And I'm going to teach that dog Bonsall to keep his hands off my property. But not a word of this outside, understand?"

"I understand," I nodded. "And now about my own affairs. The Major has told you that I am planning to get married?"

"Whether I approve or not?" and there was a little growl in the Governor's voice.

"I should like to get married with your approval," I returned.

"But you'll do it anyway, you mean."

"That's about it," I admitted.

"What on?" the Governor demanded. "On me?"

"No, sir," I returned, a little sharply "I want nothing of you but your presence at the ceremony and your good wishes."

"What is this salary that Bill's going to give you?"

"Twenty dollars a week," I answered, blushing in spite of myself.

"It has been done; it can be done again, I suppose, on twenty a week, but I shouldn't have picked you as a likely subject for the experiment," the Governor exploded. "It's all damfoolishness. You'll be back home whimpering for help in sixty days."

"If you feel that way about it, father, there's nothing more to be said," and I stood up. "But I am going to marry Anita at two and leave for the West on the night express. I did want to part friends with you."

"I said this was all damfoolishness, and I repeat it," the Governor roared, standing up, too. "But hang it all, Jack, I'm proud of you for it. You bet I'm going to the wedding, and I'm going to have the sweetest girl in New York for my daughter-in-law. Getting you married to her is like tying you up in trust. Now you run right along to Anita and draw what you want from the cashier on the way out; I won't holler if you do act a little hoggish. Horton was told to honour your drafts six months ago."

"You don't know what it means to me, father — not the money, but to feel that we're friends again," was all that I could find to say. "The wedding's at two sharp, at St. Aurea's."

"Make it three-thirty," the Governor replied. "I've got to keep in touch with the market till the close."

"It can't be done," I returned. "Anita has set the hour at two."

"It must be done," the Governor returned.

Another split seemed imminent, but the Major jumped in between us with a little of that

diplomacy which he had talked about the night before.

"By Geo'ge, Spurlock! I 'm ashamed of you!" he fairly yelled, shaking his cane at the Governor. "Can't you stop this blank chase fo' the dirty dollar long enough to see yo' own flesh and blood married? Are you goin' to keep the blankest, loveliest woman in New York waitin' at the altar while you grab a little mo' filthy lucre? Why, dash it all, man, I would n't let myself act the hog like that fo' yo' whole blank railroad."

The Governor never blinked during this tirade, but when the Major was through he turned to me and said gruffly:

"I 'll be there at two, Jack." That was as near as he could come to apologising.

I did stop at the cashier's, and drew a little of the Governor's tainted money. Then I turned to the Major, who had followed me out, and observed:

"A little more diplomacy like that last, Major, and you 'll make me an outcast for life."

The Major smiled. "My deah Jack," he replied, "have n't you learned yet that the way to handle yo' father is to beat him with yo' bare fists, and then to kick him when he 's down?" and he started off to arrange matters at the church.

Smart marriages may be made in Newport or in Europe, but they must be celebrated in St. Aurea's.

When I reached the church, I found that the magic of the Governor's money had set a dozen florists to work, and so we had the flowers and the music and everything that goes with a big wedding, except the curious crowd in the church and the indecent one in the street. Owen Corliss acted as best man, the Major gave the bride away, managing to convey the impression that he was handing over a princess of the royal blood to a base-born churl, and my old friend, the rector of St. Aurea's, read the service in that rich, unctuous voice with which he always blessed a union of millions. I could n't help thinking how horrified he would have been if he 'd known that he was wasting those chest notes on paupers.

The breakfast at Sherry's was a merry affair. The Governor kissed the bride and told her that a year of roughing it in the West would n't hurt either of us, but that he expected us back at the end of that time to take our proper place in the world. Then he handed her ten thousand dollars with which to furnish our cabin in the wilderness.

The Major, faithful to the last, accompanied us to the station to see us off. There we found the Governor's private car attached to the train to take me to my twenty-dollar job, and the coloured porter, an old friend of mine, grinning a welcome.

"Yo' father and I, Jack," began the Major, as he settled us on board, "are plannin' to make a little inspection tour of his new system next month, and we shall stop off fo' a visit in Canon City. If, suh, the amazin' account of the resou'ces of Colorado which I find in this pamphlet is accurate," and he tapped a railroad folder in his hand, "I think I shall look around preliminary to settlin' down there."

Just then the brakeman shouted the warning "All aboard," and our good-byes began.

"Major," I said, as he dropped to the platform after a last "God bless you!" "I've discovered the Big Idea!"

The Major's face lit up with the fine old enthusiasm. "What is it, Jack?" he shouted excitedly.

"Get a job and work like the devil," I yelled back, and the old fellow shook his stick at me.

Inside Anita was waiting for me. "Well, dear," I said, sitting down beside her, "between the Governor's cheque and this private car they've rather managed to turn our little problem play into a comic opera."

"But you won't let them, Jack, will you?" she asked earnestly, taking my hand.

"Not if you can be happy out there," I answered.

"Happiness does n't depend on longitude, but on ourselves, dear."

“Then we ’ll be happy.”

A long silence. Then:

“I like the Major enormously, Jack; he ’s a perfect old love. But are you *quite* sure, dear, that he has a good influence on you?”

I laughed — a horrid laugh, Anita said. For the first time I realised that I was a married man.

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